HANDOUT 2: EARLY RENAISSANCE ART

All artists/architects are Florentine unless otherwise designated.

Lorenzo Ghiberti: Elegant sculptor (c. 1381-1455) best known for his two sets of bronze doors with reliefs made for Florence's Baptistery. The earlier set (1403-24), showing the Life of Christ, and his trial panel for the door competition of 1402, with the Sacrifice of Isaac, are basically International Gothic in style. The reliefs are arranged in medieval quatrefoil frames, although tempered by naturalistic anatomy and limited three-dimensional space in the latest panels. They show knowledge of ancient Roman sculpture and its qualities. The same progression towards naturalism can be seen in his bronze statues for Orsanmichele: St. John the Baptist (c. 1415) is more decorative than the more naturalistic St. Matthew of c. 1420. Ghiberti's second set of bronze doors have ten large square relief pictures illustrating the Old Testament and have deep perspectival recessions into depth, and completely naturalistic figures. Called the "Gates of Paradise" by Michelangelo, they took Ghiberti from 1425 to 1452 to complete. These begin with Creation Stories, and end with the Meeting of Solomon and Sheba.

Donatello: sculptor (c. 1386-1466) who created works whose naturalism is tempered by an expressive piety. Throughout his career Donatello showed an interest in optical corrections based on the positioning of his work. Until 1450 he primarily adapted Classical prototypes to Renaissance themes: David (1408), St. Mark (1411-13), St. George (1415-17), the bronze David (c. 1440?), and Gattamelata (1443-53) are all based loosely on Classical statuary. His relief works after 1425 frequently showed a deep perspectival space: the Feast of Herod (c. 1425). After 1450 Donatello's late works show a frenzied religious expressionism: Mary Magdalene (c. 1455); Judith and Holophernes (late 1450s). He is also important for his role in transmitting Renaissance style to northern Italy during his stay in Padua (c. 1443-53).

Paolo Uccello: decorative painter famous for his attention to perspective. Created an illusionistic wall tomb of a Condotteri (Monument to Sir John Hawkwood) in 1436-it is painted to look like marble sculpture! His most famous works today are wainscotting panels from the Medici Palace of the 1440s. These depict the Battle of San Romano, which took place in 1432, as a tournament.

Domenico Veneziano: Venetian-born painter who moved to Florence in 1439. Known for his soft, glowing colors: St. Lucy Altarpiece (c. 1445-47), an early "sacra conversazione."

Andrea del Castagno: painter of strangely expressive works, died young in 1457. Castagno's work in the 1450s shows a linearism of style which predominates in Florentine painting until the late Quattrocento. Works: Last Supper (1447), David (c. 1450), "Cumaean Sibyl" (1448).
**Jacopo della Quercia**: Sienese sculptor of powerful, if not wholly anatomically correct figures. His Fonte Gaia ("Gay Fountain," 1419, because it’s a happy thing for the town) at Siena uses reliefs to decorate a public amenity, but his best work is on the door of San Petronio at Bologna (c. 1430), showing scenes of Genesis ("Expulsion form the Garden of Eden") that later influenced Michelangelo.

**Sassetta**: Sienese painter (c. 1400-1450) whose altarpiece for the Church of San Francesco at Sansepolcro (near Arezzo) of 1437-1444 shows a Late Gothic spirituality with some signs of the new Renaissance space in the background. The "Saint Francis in Ecstasy" from the back of the altarpiece is especially notable.

**Federigo da Montefeltro**: Count and later (1475) Duke of Urbino, and the Pope's general. A great warrior and patron of the arts whose court became a center of Humanism. Had a notable palace at Urbino (see below).

**Piero della Francesca**: Central Italian artist (c. 1420-1492) who trained in Florence under Veneziano, then moved back home to Sansepolcro to work there and at the court of Urbino. Piero was interested in geometry and perspective, so much so that they dominate his strangely abstract compositions. He also wrote a mathematical treatise on perspective late in his life. Works: Baptism of Christ (c. 1450), Legend of the True Cross at San Francesco at Arezzo (1450s), the Flagellation (1460s), and Portraits of Federigo da Montefeltro and Battista Sforza (1473); "Madonna and Saints with Federigo da Montefeltro" (1472-4).

**Luciano Laurana**: architect, originally from Yugoslavia, who built large parts of the Ducal Palace at Urbino between 1468 and 1479. His work there probably includes the delightful Studiolo (study) with its illusionistic intarsia enlays, and the courtyard notable for its combination of grandeur and harmony. Laurana's ideas about urban planning are probably reflected in the "Ideal Cityscape" panel paintings produced in the late 15th century in Urbino.

**Medici Palace**: designed by Michelozzo di Bartolommeo and built after 1444, it was the first Renaissance palazzo. Features powerful rustication on the exterior (a reference to Florence's Palazzo della Signoria), aas well as a cornice citing ancient Roman prototypes. The interior is arranged around courtyard. Included much art by Uccello, Donatello, Pollaiuolo and others, including a notable chapel with an altarpiece by Fra Filippo Lippi (Adoration of the Child) and frescoes of the Procession of the Magi by Benozzo Gozzoli (1459).

**Bernardo Rossellino**: sculptor and architect best known for his tomb of Lionardo Bruni (c. 1445-50), a well-known humanist. As an architect Bernardo remodeled the Palazzo Rucellai, helped Pope Pius II redesign his home town as Pienza (1459-62), and shows the influence of Alberti.
Leonbattista Alberti: universal genius of the Early Renaissance, Alberti was from an exiled Florentine family and wrote theoretical works on painting (1435), architecture (1450) and sculpture (1430s). These helped to disseminate the new Renaissance style of art. He was also an important architect who adapted ancient Roman architectural decoration to Renaissance buildings: Malatesta Temple (San Francesco) at Rimini, Palazzo Rucellai at Florence (1455-58), the facade of Santa Maria Novella at Florence (1456), and Sant'Andrea at Mantua (1470).

Palazzo Strozzi, Florence: great three-story palace built for a banking family 1489-1507. In plan and appearance the most perfect Early Renaissance palace in Florence.

Giuliano da Sangallo: architect whose interest in Classical Antiquity and Brunelleschi's work is reflected in his buildings: Villa Medici at Poggio a Caiano (1480s), Santa Maria delle Carceri at Prato (1485-92).

Antonio del Pollaiuolo: sculptor and painter interested in strong moving and interesting poses. Works: bronze statuette of "Hercules and Antaeus" (c. 1475), "Battle of Ten Nude Men" (1470s), "St. Sebastian" (1441?, more probably c. 1460).

Andrea del Verrocchio: sculptor and painter, teacher (kind of) of Leonardo da Vinci. An expressionistic artist in the tradition of Castagno. Works: Baptism of Christ (c. 1470), Doubting of St. Thomas (1465-83), David (1470s), Equestrian Monument of Colleone at Venice (c. 1481-96).

Sandro Botticelli: exquisite painter for the aristocracy of the late Quattrocento in Florence. Botticelli moved between religious and mythological scenes with ease. Works: The Adoration of the Magi (early 1470s), Birth of Venus (c. 1480), Primavera or Spring (c. 1480). In later life he became a devotee of Savonarola and his late work shows a spiritual and moralistic fervor: Mystical Nativity (1500). Also painted in the Sistine Chapel (1481).

Domenico Ghirlandaio: painter of Florentine society in the late Quattrocento. His fine color sense is visible in works such as the Sassetti Chapel (1485) in Santa Trinità, Florence (including the "Adoration of the Shepherds", and the touching "Old Man with a Child" (c. 1480). Also painted in the Sistine Chapel (1481).


Northern Italy

Ca' d'Oro: elegant palazzo in the late Gothic style in Venice, built 1221-1437. So-called because its façade once had gilded paintings.
**Pisanello**: late International Gothic artist (d. 1455), trained by Gentile da Fabriano, worked mainly for the courts in northern Italy, designing notable portrait medallions and painting courtly scenes (Vision of St. Eustace, c. 1440; Sala Pisanello, Ducal Palace, Mantua, 1447, with scenes of the Arthurian legends). He also went to Naples in 1449, where he designed the first stage of the classicizing Aragonese Arch of the royal palace (c. 1450).

**Jacopo Bellini**: Venetian painter active c. 1423-1470. Father of Giovanni and Gentile Bellini, both notable painters, father-in-law of Andrea Mantegna. Jacopo was trained by Gentile da Fabriano, and until the mid-Quattrocento. His painting style is Late Gothic. Notebooks of around 1450 show Jacopo exploring the new Renaissance perspectival space defined by Alberti (Way to Calvary), but with a typically northern Italian interest in deep recessions into the distance. These notebooks were later used by Mantegna and Giovanni Bellini.

**Andrea Mantegna**: painter from Padua (1431-1506) early influenced by Donatello's work in Padua, son-in-law of Jacopo Bellini. Mantegna's figural style is relief-like and hard, but steeped in Classicism and emotionally moving. His background landscape vistas are deeper and more detailed than those of his Florentine contemporaries. After 1459 he became the court painter for the Gonzaga family at Mantua. Works: San Zeno Altarpiece at Verona (1456-59), St. Sebastian (1450s-1470s), Camera Picta with its scenes of the “daily life” of the Gonzaga family in the Palace at Mantua (1465-74), including an early illusionistic ceiling scherzo, Parnassus (1500).

**Antonello da Messina**: painter from Sicily, who had learned to use oil paint in the realistic Flemish style. He used this to create moving and lovely images. His brief stay in Venice (1475) influenced Giovanni Bellini and began the distinguished Venetian tradition of oil painting. Works: St. Jerome in his Study (c. 1455), St. Sebastian (c. 1475).

**Gentile Bellini**: eldest son of Jacopo and brother of Giovanni, painted mainly for the Scuole or confraternities. His most famous painting is "The Procession of the Relic of the True Cross" (1496), which shows an annual religious festival, but also a miracle that took place in 1444. Also painted for the Turkish sultan in the 1480s!

**Giovanni Bellini**: Venetian painter (c. 1430-1516) whose work was the basis for the flowering of Venetian painting in the 16th century. His early style was close to that of his brother-in-law Mantegna, but more poetic (Madonna Adoring the Sleeping Child, c. 1455). In 1475 he saw the work of Antonello and began to explore the coloristic possibilities of oil in works such as "St. Francis in Ecstasy" (c. 1485), "Madonna of the Meadow" c. 1500, San Zaccaria Altarpiece (c. 1505). Also did a fine portrait of "Doge Lorenzo Loredan" in 1501. Throughout his long career Bellini showed a love of deep landscape recessions which, together with his poetic use of color, form the heritage which he bequeathed to later Venetian painters.

**Families and Institutions**
**Sacristy**: a chapel near the sanctuary of a church in which the priests’ robes and liturgical vessels (like the chalice, paten, candelsticks etc.) might be kept safe when not in use in the Mass. Often endowed by a wealthy family as a funerary chapel (like the Old sacristy in San Lorenzo, Florence by the Medici family).

**Palazzo**: an elaborate town house of a rich family, usually by the mid-14th century with a exterior and a colonnaded interior courtyard with statuary that served as the focus of family activities. The main rooms are usually on the second floor (*piano nobile*). The name *palazzo* (palace) comes from the hill in ancient Rome where the Roman emperor’s dwelling was located.

**Villa**: an elaborate country house, usually a working farm as well. By the 16th century most wealthy families have one of these, and used it for leisure. Was often elaborately decorated.

**Medici Family**: In the early 15th century, Giovanni de’ Bicci de’ Medici amassed a fortune from banking and pharmaceuticals, and commissioned the Old Sacristy from Brunelleschi as his burial chapel. His son Cosimo (the Elder) became de-facto ruler of Florence in 1434 by exiling all his rivals, and ran the commune by controlling the ballot for the town council until his death in 1464. He also patronized the arts, commissioning the refurbishment of the Monastery of San Marco in the 1430s (with its paintings by Fra Angelico), and the Medici Palace in 1444 from Michelozzo. He also helped pay for Brunelleschi’s work on the interior of San Lorenzo, His favorite painter was Filippo Lippi, who did the altarpiece for the Medici Palace Chapel just before 1459. His favorite sculptor was Donatello, who made the David and the Judith and Holophernes for Cosimo. Other artists working for the Medici included Uccello, Gozzoli, Botticelli and Pollaiuolo. Cosimo’s son Piero the Gouty died in 1469 (he had three sons; one, Carlo, was illegitimate and became a bishop). Piero’s son Lorenzo (the Magnificent), a gifted poet, then ruled Florence until his death in 1492. During his reign the family fortunes declined, and the family faced a major threat in 1478 from the Pazzi Conspiracy, when Lorenzo’s brother Giuliano was assassinated at High Easter Mass. Lorenzo’s son Piero the Unlucky ceded Pisa to a French army in 1494, and the family was driven out by the angry Florentines and its works of art confiscated. The family retook Florence in 1512 with the rise of the family in the church: Lorenzo’s son became Pope Leo X in 1513 and Giuliano’s son was Pope in the 1520s and 30s. A branch of the Medici family became hereditary Dukes of Tuscany in the 1540s and lasted into the 18th century.