The most outstanding feature in the history of sixteenth century art is that now artists took their place among the great minds of the age.

The few artists who dominated this period enjoyed international fame and influence, which remained so until the nineteenth century.

While there were artistic endeavors of the sixteenth century, it was movement in the religious sector which was considered the main event.

The Protestant Reformation questioned the teachings and practices of the Catholic church and in doing so questioned the traditions and assumptions underlying European culture.

The printing press allowed for these new ideas to spread throughout Europe.

Martin Luther’s first protest was against the indulgence in the rebuilding of St. Peter in Rome.

In the matter of painting and sculpture, Luther was not against them but rather indifferent. It was other reformers who regarded them idolatrous and sinful.

Key Terms:
- Protestant Reformation
- maniera
- chiaroscuro
- sfumato
- aerial perspective

Learning Objectives:
- The influence of the Protestant Reformation on the art world.
- The changing role of the artist in the sixteenth century.
- The use of harmony in architecture.
- The introduction of Mannerism.

Reform and Early Sixteenth Century Art in the North

Even though the forms and techniques of Italian Renaissance art spread quickly, it was only gradually accepted in northern Europe, which allowed the new style to co-exist with Gothic.
Hieronymus Bosch

- Jan van Eyck’s painting style continued to be influential well into the sixteenth century.
- However, Bosch’s painting style had a different origin for he basically lived in isolation from the styles of the day.

Bosch, *Hell* (right panel of *Garden of Earthly Delights*) (fig. 11.4)

- The painting was given this title, though its precise subject matter and original function was never known.
- Bosch was a contemporary of da Vinci’s, yet his painting is nothing like what was being done in Italy and elsewhere in Northern Europe.
- Bosch stresses the frailty and wickedness, not the beauty and nobility, of humankind.
- In this panel Bosch illustrates his version of hell in pure chaos.
- Through the burning buildings, figures and objects are depicted with extreme detail, they seem to float within this personal vision of hell.

Grünewald

- Mathis Gothardt has been known since the late seventeenth century as Grünewald.

Grünewald, *Isenheim Altarpiece*, center panel (fig. 11.5)

- This polyptych was painted for the high altar of the hospital chapel in the monastery of St. Anthony of Isenheim.
- This center panel was opened on Sundays to reveal paintings of the *Annunciation*, *Nativity* and *Resurrection* and on feast days that part was also opened to display the sculpted corpus.
- In this panel the depiction of Christ is one of torture and is one of the most violent ones in Western art.
- Christ’s body is torn and bruised hanging heavily on the cross with his mouth gaping from His last breath.
- Blood flows from the wounds in His side and those in the feet while His skin is already starting to turn gangrenous.
- Grünewald presents this scene against a desolate stony landscape and dark skies.
Protestant Art

- After the Protestant Reformation, most artists suffered from a sharp decline in patronage and many were forced to emigrate, some to England.

Holbein, the Younger, Erasmus of Rotterdam (fig. 11.7)

- Holbein was one of the artists who left Basel in 1526 and went to England to eventually become the court painter of Henry VIII.
- Erasmus had written In Praise of Folly, which was a sharp attack on the abuses of the Church, and it was he who wrote Holbein’s letter of introduction when the latter went to London.
- This painting was one of many done of Erasmus by Holbein and shows him standing beside a column carved with Classical motifs and he is resting his figures on a book which is inscribed in Greek.
- Holbein’s paintings are painfully truthful and filled with attention to detail.

Dürer, The Four Apostles (fig. 11.10)

- Dürer experienced a spiritual crisis during the Protestant Reformation and accepted Luther’s approach.
- This painting was done for the city hall, not the church, and was never meant to part of a triptych.
- On the left panel is St. John, Luther’s favorite evangelist, standing in front of St. Peter, the founder of the Roman Church.
- On the right panel St. Paul, who is often regarded as the spiritual father of Protestantism, stands in front of the evangelist St. Mark.
- This painting is definitely Protestant in nature.
- Another aspect of Protestantism presented in this painting is that the figures are painted equal to each other in size.

HIGH RENAISSANCE IN ITALY

- The early part of the sixteenth century was a time of political stress and warfare in Italy.
- In 1527, Rome was sacked by German and Spanish mercenaries hired by Charles V.
- Pope Julius II was constantly leading his troops on military campaigns.
• In spite of the unrest, this period was the time of the High Renaissance, in which an art of serene and elevated conception along with Classical balance began.
• The three main artists of this period, da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael created an art of great technical accomplishment and perfect co-ordination of mind, eye and hand.

**Leonardo da Vinci**

• The high ranking given to Leonardo is remarkable due to the small number of works he completed.
• It was due to his writings about the role of creating being more of a mental process and not so much in the executing that lead to the notion of a great artist being a genius.
• Trained as a painter and sculptor Leonardo grew up with no interest in Classical humanism and Neoplatonic speculations.
• Leonardo’s interests expanded to all natural phenomena.
• His passion to understand the structure of the human body led him to dissect corpses and make the first accurate anatomical drawings.

**da Vinci, Last Supper** (fig. 11.13)

• In order not to submit to the limitations of true fresco painting, Leonardo used a slower drying medium such as oil with the painting. Unfortunately, the oil did not hold up and signs of decay began during his lifetime.
• The space in the painting extends out into the real space of the refectory.
• Leonardo has portrayed the disciples in groups of three, emotionally connecting to each other and to Christ.
• Each disciple is responding in a different and psychologically revealing way and each facial expression and gesture identifies the disciple.
• Though Leonardo was not a Christian he managed to present this subject in a scene of human tragedy and by doing so deepened its religious significance.

**da Vinci, Virgin and Child with St. Anne** (fig. 11.14)

• In this painting one can see Leonardo’s careful study of plants and anatomy.
• This painting also shows techniques invented by Leonardo: chiaroscuro, sfumato and aerial perspective.
• The result is a painting of figures in a landscape close to visual reality yet veiled in a mysterious unworldly atmosphere.
Harmony, Unity and Raphael

- One of the many problems confronting artists at this time was reconciling three dimensional naturalism with symmetry and poise.

Raphael, Alba Madonna (fig. 11.17)
- With this painting Raphael approached the problem in an ingenious way.
- Raphael has placed the subjects in such a way that the curves of the bodies blend with the curved picture plane in a natural pose.
- Placing St. John with the Christ Child was an idea that Raphael got from Leonardo.
- One major difference between the two painters is the use of light. Raphael’s figures are bathed in even sunshine.

Raphael, School of Athens (fig. 11.23)
- Of the walls for the Stanza della Segnatura, this one was devoted to philosophy with Greek thinkers and scientists.
- Raphael came up with the idea of a gathering of thinkers actively engaged in philosophical discourse, teaching, learning, talking, pondering with great expressions of mental concentration.
- Once again Raphael borrows from Leonardo the idea of placing his figures within a framing arch.
- Yet here the figures are seen as being independent of the room and not as an extension.

Michelangelo

- Raphael and Michelangelo were very different from each other in character as well as in their backgrounds.
- Michelangelo, who came from an impoverished Florentine family, was unsociable, mistrustful, moody, untidy, obsessed with his work and very proud.
- His formative years were with the Lorenzo de’ Medici family where he studied sculpture.

Michelangelo, David (fig. 11.25)
- Michelangelo worked for three years on this larger than life size statue and it is the first nude done in this scale since antiquity.
- The representation of David here is not as a victor, but as a fearless champion confronting his opponent. It was seen by some Florentines as symbolizing their new republic.
• Michelangelo’s _David_ does not have classical proportions, in that his hands and feet are oversized, the muscles and veins are swollen.

Michelangelo, _ceiling of the Sistine Chapel_ (figs. 11.29; 30)
• The vault measures roughly 133 x 43 feet with many curved surfaces.
• Michelangelo painted the whole ceiling in true fresco, almost single-handed.
• The ceiling was conceived as an imaginary architectural structure rising above the chapel and the curved areas were treated as continuations of the walls.
• The figures in the uppermost portion are presented as independent pictures.
• Between the pictures on the pilasters are nude adolescents flexing their muscles and showing off their athletic frames as if in praise of God’s creation.
• To Michelangelo the male body represented the summit of physical and spiritual beauty.
• The figures were meant to be seen by the Pope when he sat at the chancel but to the visitor they appear to be in reverse and upside down.

Michelangelo, _Medici Chapel_ (fig. 11.34)
• After completing the Sistine Chapel Michelangelo returned to Florence and set about to work on the family mausoleum.
• Michelangelo used the Corinthian order and a dark-gray and white color scheme which follows Brunelleschi.
• Otherwise the chapel is revolutionary in its design, in the way it broke free from the Classical orders in such ways as the columns having recessed panels instead of fluting.
• Much of the architectural elements have no structural function in that they only simulate the architectural forms.
• Michelangelo’s approach was more that of a sculptor removing stone than that of a builder raising one structural element on another.
• The statues, such as the one of the general in Roman military costume, are idealized images, not portraits.
• Michelangelo’s iron-muscled Day with his roughly worked face staring over a huge, smoothly carved shoulder is set against his heavy-limbed Night, with her tired breasts and creased belly as if in troubled sleep.
• These two figures are invested with the symbolism of the human tragedy and the dualism of body and spirit.
THE VENETIAN HIGH RENAISSANCE

- Venice was the only Italian city to resist political and economic domination by France, Spain or the Papacy and the only one to retain a nominally republican system of government.
- The Church did not enjoy in Venice the absolute predominance as it did elsewhere in Italy; therefore, state and private patronage of the arts was considerable.

Giorgione

- Giorgione was an elusive figure with no more than six easel paintings attributed to him.
- He introduced a new technique, a new style and a new type of painting in that he was the first artist to explore the luminous effects of painting on canvas with pigments mixed with oil and flexible resins.
- Giorgione also did not make any detailed preparatory drawings on paper or on the canvas as the Florentine artists did.

Giorgione, Three Philosophers (fig. 11.42)

- The elements of softness of contour, atmospheric subtlety and a lack of fully understanding the subject matter are all elements of Giorgione’s style.
- The composition in this painting is asymmetrical with the figures balanced by the dark entrance to a cave.
- The figures are in the classical triad of poses - profile, frontal and three-quarters - all being somewhat detached from the other.

Anonymous (Giorgione or Titian) Concert Champêtre (fig. 11.43)

- This painting is entirely secular and without any discernible narrative content.
- The theme might possibly be harmony, though, between what is left up to the viewer.
- This type of painting could only be found in Venice where the private patrons were rich enough and sophisticated enough to create such a demand.

Titian

- Some regard him as the greatest Renaissance painter in that he became in a real sense the founder of modern painting because he made oil on canvas the main medium of Western art.
• Titian also explored all of this new medium’s possibilities for the first time, from the animation of the picture surface with vigorous brush-strokes on the rough texture of the canvas.
• After 1550 Titian worked mainly for Philip II of Spain and painted little for Venice.

Titian, Assumption of the Virgin (fig. 11.45)
• Venetian artists were dependent on public commissions for fame and fortune.
• This altarpiece was the largest ever painted in Venice and was designed to catch the eye of anyone entering the west door of the nave some 100 yards away.
• All of the figures are caught in dramatically expressive movement and the structure of the composition is created as much by color as by form.

Tintoretto and Veronese
• Since Titian was working mostly for Philip II most of the public commissions went to younger painters.

Tintoretto, Crucifixion (fig. 11.49)
• Tintoretto combines the coloring of Titian with the drawing of Michelangelo with his violent foreshortening and gesticulating figures in strenuous muscular movement.
• This huge panoramic canvas stretches from wall to wall and Tintoretto uses great plunging diagonal lines to meet and intersect in the body of Christ.
• The eye of the viewer is not allowed to take time to rest on the individual figures before being forced to the dominating central cross.

Veronese, Feast in the House of Levi (fig. 11.50)
• The subject matter of this painting is the Last Supper, but because of the inclusion of what was deemed at the time as inappropriate people, the title was changed to this.
• Veronese has created an imaginary world of elegance and grandeur, of marble, gold and costly fabrics.

Sansovino, Palladio, and the Laws of Harmony
• Most of the great sixteenth century architects were also painters or sculptors and it was thought that if an architect was neither that he would have ‘no eye for what really makes the beauty of architecture’.
Sansovino, Library of S. Marco  (fig. 11.51)
- Sansovino was a refugee from after the city was sacked.
- The library is in front of the plaza of the S Marco.
- One of Sansovino’s problems was to marry the many facades in the plaza and has turned some of the other facades’ elements into a true Roman idiom.
- The library introduced High Renaissance architecture to Venice.

Palladio, Villa Rotunda (fig. 11.53)
- Palladio was unusual in that he was an architect who did not practice any other art form and was trained in the building craft.
- His practice was mainly domestic – another novelty – ranging from palaces to villas and he designed buildings of the utmost dignity, which could be constructed by local labor from the simplest and cheapest materials.
- Palladio designed this villa to take advantage of the site and this sensitivity to landscape is apparent in the other villas he designed.
- An aristocratic effect was created by the use of a temple front to emphasize the main facades.
- This villa has four hexastyle porticoes and is perhaps the most perfect realization of the Renaissance ideal of a free-standing centrally planned building.
- To Palladio and his contemporaries, the phrase ‘harmoniously proportioned’ was to be taken seriously because to observe the laws of harmony was believed to attune all aspects of life on earth to a heavenly ideal.

MANNERISM AND MANNERISMS
- The term ‘Mannerist’ comes from the Italian word maniera to imply ease of manner, virtuosity, fluency and refinement.
- This term was used in reference to the works of Leonardo, Raphael and Michelangelo and also had a different meaning that being the self-conscious display of personal traits.
- This latter meaning was a derogatory one and is the way the word will be used for the work of artists, whose paintings were done in sharp acid colors and with figures writhing in distorted perspective.
- There are many theories about the Mannerist style being a reaction against the ideals of the High Renaissance or an expression of the spiritual crises of the time or solely an art for art’s sake.
CORREGGIO AND MANNERIST ‘LICENCE’

- The changing style can be seen in two artists: Correggio and Parmigianino.
- Correggio’s paintings perfectly express the early sixteenth century notion of stylishness.

Correggio, Danae (fig. 11.56)

- Correggio’s mastery in rendering flesh was fully developed in his oil paintings.
- No other artist had ever painted the blush of a perfect youthful complexion with greater sensitivity.
- His idealized images of youthful beauty never passed beyond natural limits.

Parmigianino, Madonna with the Long Neck (fig. 11.58)

- Parmigianino’s ideal of feminine beauty seems to have derived less from art and still less from nature than from literary conceits such as comparing a woman’s shoulders, neck and head with a perfectly formed vase.
- The Madonna’s hands, her right foot and the limbs of the Child are all elongated.

Pieter Brueghel the Elder

- Brueghel began his career by painting and drawing, for engravers, moralizing subjects in a strange manner which goes back to Bosch.
- Brueghel rejected many of the Italian ideas and worked for private collectors of educated taste.
- Brueghel’s series, which record the cycle of the seasons, are essentially paintings of landscape and atmosphere rather than illustrations of ‘the labors of the months’.

Brueghel, Blind leading the Blind (fig. 11.69)

- From the Italians, Brueghel learned aerial perspective and the advantage of a high viewpoint.
- Here Brueghel has made this lowest class of the social order stand for all humanity.
- His peasants are individuals.

El Greco

- The Italian mannerisms were reflected in El Greco’s deeply emotional religious art.
- He was born on Crete and went to Venice, where he began his career by painting icons in the Byzantine style.
• The aim of El Greco’s art was to arouse religious fervor and to elevate the spirit above the everyday world of sensory perceptions.

• This was at the height of the Counter Reformation and nowhere was it more promoted by both the Church and the state than in Spain where El Greco went in 1576.

El Greco, Resurrection  (fig. 11.70)
• The brushwork is ecstatically free, colors are used expressively and the figures are elongated to maximum tension.

• El Greco has left behind the traditional iconography as is seen with the lack of a tomb and the body of Christ could suggest the Ascension as well as the Resurrection.