

RENAISSANCE

RAPHAEL • BOTTICELLI • TITIAN • BELLINI

15TH & 16TH CENTURY ITALIAN PAINTINGS
FROM THE ACCADEMIA CARRARA, BERGAMO

Artist information



Raphael *Saint Sebastian* 1501–02, oil on wood panel, 45.1 x 36.5 cm, Accademia Carrara, Bergamo

Saint Sebastian is depicted by Raphael holding an arrow, which would become the instrument used by his torturers. Instead of the traditional iconography of a partially draped man shown full length, here the artist presents an elegant young man wearing rich fabrics—gold-embroidered black brocade, a red cloak with gold edging—and a gold chain. Raphael enjoys pictorial devices such as the saint's oval face mirrored in the loop of his chain, the curved halo echoed in his eyebrows. Again the early Christian subject is placed in an idyllic central Italian landscape of the Renaissance.



Sandro Botticelli *The story of Virginia the Roman* c. 1500, tempera on wood panel, 83.3 x 165.5 cm, Accademia Carrara, Bergamo

The Florentine artist Botticelli created **The story of Virginia the Roman** as a large panel. He narrates the tragedy of a young girl whose death saves the Roman republic. Reading from the left, Virginia's fate unfolds as though on a stage from the assault on her virtue, trial by her kidnapper, murder at the hands of her father, to her posthumous vindication. Botticelli presents the theatrical scene in three acts, rich in colour and rhythmic in movement, set within grand Classical architecture.



Titian *Madonna with Child in a landscape* c.1507, oil on wood panel, 38.8 x 48.3 cm, Accademia Carrara, Bergamo

Among other exquisite images of the **Madonna and Child** is Titian's canvas of about 1507, resplendent in colour, sensuous in its rendering of flesh and drapery, and set in the countryside surrounding Venice. Such depictions of local scenery, bringing the sacred stories home to their audiences, signal the birth of landscape painting. The naturalism of the scene is underlined by the warm rapport of mother and baby, totally absorbed in each other.



Giovanni Bellini *Madonna and Child (The Alzano Madonna)* c.1488, oil on wood panel, 84.3 cm x 65.5 cm, Accademia Carrara, Bergamo

Renaissance Europe saw the introduction of oil paint. The medium spread into Italy from Flanders in the second half of the fifteenth century, and its brilliant hues came to its apogee in Venice in the sixteenth century. One of the earliest masters was Bellini, whose **Madonna and Child** shows a mother looking tenderly at her baby Son. Her deep blue drapery dominates the image. The Christ Child stands on a marble ledge, on which rests a pear. Bellini proudly signs his work on a painted cartellino (small piece of paper).