Class 3 : Sensibility and Idea

A. Street, Field, and Garden

1. Section title A (Giorgione: *La tempesta*, detail)

This picture comes from Venice; Venice and Rome will be my points of call in the second hour. For this first hour, though, I want to focus on Florence with a brief glance at its neighbor Siena. But I'm going to start with a place that is not a real city at all, a painting from the Walters Art Gallery, here in Baltimore. With it, I'll play a piece of music. Both are from about the same date, 1490 or so. What is the experience of putting them together?

2. Carnival song from the time of Lorenzo de'Medici
3. Fra Carnevale (attrib.): *Ideal City* (c.1490, Walters Art Gallery)

What did you think? I trust you noticed the contrast: a laughing crowd singing in the street versus a virtually deserted piazza. They don't go together at all, do they? The song is how it really must have been, at least on carnival days; here, from a minor artist in the next century, is a Florentine street scene that would fit the music much better.

4. Unknown Florentine painter: *Street Scene* (mid-1500s)
5. Fra Carnevale (attrib.): *Ideal City* (repeat, with some buildings labeled)

The first painting, though, is like no scene in Italy you would actually see. Yet it is based on actual Italian buildings; here are a few of them: the Medici *palazzo* in Florence, the Colosseum in Rome, the Arch of Constantine also in Rome, and the the Baptistery of Florence Cathedral. Why did the artist put them together like this? One reason is probably technical: to show off his grasp of perspective geometry, invented in Florence in the earlier part of the 15th century; a variety of volumes of different shapes, arranged around a tesselated marble pavement are the ideal subjects for him to demonstrate control.

6. Fra Carnevale (attrib.): *Ideal City* (repeat, with fuller labels)

The point of that control, however, is to create an *ideal*. And the point of choosing just those buildings is also to portray an ideal, the balance of qualities that go into making a well-balanced city-state. You need a balance of civilian government, military power, and the Church. You need a system of laws. You need virtues on which to model civic behavior. And you need to provide for your citizens; the Romans said "Bread and circuses," which is a bit cynical, but you do need to provide sport and recreation, good accommodation, and basic services. If you are looking for National Characteristics in Italian Renaissance art, you won't find them much tendency to depict local subjects, but you *will* find this constant urge towards depicting an idea. The contrast in Italian Ranaissance art between intellectual **idea** and direct **sensation** is the theme of my class today.

7. Lorenzetti: *Good Government in the City* (1339, Palazzo Publico, Siena)

The Walters picture is not the first Ideal City in Renaissance art. Take a trip to Siena, and go back to the century *before* the Renaissance, and you'll find this fresco by **Ambrogio Lorenzetti** (1300–48). It is part of a sequence covering three walls of the council chamber in the City Hall called *Allegory of Good and Bad Government*. Despite the 150-year difference in time, there would be no clash putting this together with the music I played earlier. This is clearly the view of the city very much as it would have been; any idealizing goes into making all the citizens so wonderfully upbeat. Let's put it with music of this earlier period, though: a piece by a man called **Lorenzo da Firenze** (1300–72) describing a *caccia*, or hunt. But the word is also a pun, for the three lines (voice and two instruments) are actually an enormous canon, each with the same tune that chases the one before it—a *hunt* of a different kind.

8. Lorenzo da Firenze: *A poste messe*, with Lorenzetti fresco
9. Lorenzetti: *Good Government in the Country* (1339, Palazzo Publico, Siena)

This has an obvious kinship with the ***Très riches heures***, doesn't it? <mark>I mentioned that art North of the Alps emerged seamlessly from its medieval roots. You could say the same thing about Lorenzetti and some other Sienese artists of the *trecento* (14th century)</mark>; their combination of realistic detail and robust feeling is not so different from Northern work at all. But it only survived in brief flashes. You don't get landscapes like this in most Renaissance paintings; Italian landscape as a genre would remain idealized well into the 19th century.

B. Primavera

10. Section title 2 (Francesco Landini, from the *Squarcialupi Codex*)

In a previous course, I opened a class on the Renaissance with a song by this man, **Francesco Landini** (1325–97), the most famous Italian composer of his time (and the last Italian to gain such fame before the field was taken over for more than a century by Franco-Flemish imports). But actually we know little about him. We know he went blind in childhood; we think he might have been the pupil of Lorenzo da Firenze, whose music we have just heard. But we don't even know his real name! Anyway the song, "Ecco la primavera" (Here comes the Spring!) seemed just too perfect to introduce the artistic Spring of the *quattrocento*, the Renaissance. Here it is, performed by a New York group, **Alkemie**.

11. Landini: *Ecco la primavera*
12. Botticelli: *Primavera* (c.1480, Florence Uffizi)
13. *Lady and the Unicorn* tapestry, "Mon seul désir" (c.1480, Paris Cluny)

To follow this with the *Primavera* of **Sandro Botticelli** (1445–1510) seems a no-brainer. Yet there is probably 100 years between them; the one spirit did not lead smoothly into the other. Except, perhaps that the use of a background studded with flowers derives from medieval tapestry tradition, such as the *Lady with the Unicorn* in the Cluny Museum in Paris—though the new men of the Renaissance would have wanted to play this down!

14. Religious subjects by Fra Angelico, Filippo Lippi, and Filippino Lippi

You will get various religious paintings during the Florentine *quattrocento* (1400s) that include landscapes painted in a similar spirit; we have already seen one of them, the Fra Angelico *Annunciation* in the Prado. Yet it is not until the end of the century that artists felt able to synthesize the impulses of sensation and idea.

15. Botticelli: *Primavera* (c.1480, Florence Uffizi), with reverse labels
16. Botticelli: *Primavera* (c.1480, Florence Uffizi), reversed and labeled

For what is Botticelli's *Primavera* if not an idea? To understand it, you need to read it from right to left; on a computer, we can just flip it. **Zephyrus**, the March wind, blows on the fertile ground (**Chloris**), bringing forth the flowers of Spring (**Flora**, or **Primavera**). The whole thing is presided over by **Venus**, as the goddess of April. She is attended in turn by the **Three Graces**, while **Mercury** (the Roman God of May), brushes away the clouds to his right. The whole thing is an allegory—an allegory, what's more, peopled with Classical deities and based on the reading of Classical authors. That's the what the Florentines themselves meant by *Renaissance*: the rediscovery of Classical models.

17. Botticelli: *Primavera* (c.1480, Florence Uffizi), repeat of original

There are many other references in the picture also. The oranges probably refer to the Medici symbol, the golden balls; and what is Mercury but the patron of doctors, *medici?*

C. Brunelleschi's Legacy

18. Section title C (Brunelleschi: *Ospedale degli Innocenti*)

There is an elegant grace to much in the Florentine *quattrocento*, typified by the lovely cloister of the *Ospedale degli Innocenti* (Foundling Hospital) built by **Filippo Brunelleschi** (1377–1446) in the 1420s. Brunelleschi will be my linchpin for the rest of the hour, but I would not have you think he was all elegance and nothing but.

19. Brunelleschi at San Lorenzo

Here are two shots of Bruenelleschi's work for the church of San Lorenzo. **The Old Sacristy** was funded by the Medici and built first; you will see that it is based entirely on classical motifs: classical orders below, and simple semi-circles above. It shows strength, restraint, and a scholarly interest in Classical models. **The nave** was designed at that time, but not completed until the Medici took responsibility for that too. You see the same motifs as in the sacristy translated to three dimensions: an airy procession of columns in the middle, and simply-framed chapels along the sides. But this is more than archaeology; it is the embodiment of an idea.

20. Leonardo da Vinci: *Vitruvian Man* (c.1490), with *Primavera* detail

Let's go back to our contrast of Sensibility and Idea.These are two images of roughly the same date: the Three Graces from Botticelli's *Primavera* that we have just seen, and a drawing by **Leonardo da Vinci** (1452–1519) commonly called *The Vitruvian Man*. And this is pure Idea. It follows up theories from the one book on the visual arts to have remained in more or less continuous view during the Middle Ages: the architectural treatise *De Architectura* by the 1st-century-BCE engineer and architect **Vitruvius**. It is based on the Platonic concept of the Ideal, and that there is a perfect system of proportions based on the human body that can be applied to architecture and other aspects of design—hence the term **Humanism**. His work became known to Florentine artists in the 14-teens.

21. Brunelleschi: San Lorenzo nave

Look again at Brunelleschi's nave. Because all the modules are perfect squares, and each order of columns maintains a known ratio of spacing to height, you immediately feel in tune with the scale of this church, large though it is. Renaissance clarity takes the place of medieval mystery.

22. Masaccio: *The Holy Trinity* (1427, Santa Maria Novella, Florence)
23. — the same, with the Arch of Septimus Severus

Brunelleschi's closest compatriot in terms of painting is the tragically short-lived **Masaccio** (Tommaso di Ser Giovanni, 1401–28). His *The Holy Trinity* fresco in the Church of Santa Maria Novella might almost be the Brunelleschi Sacristy in paint. The subject is the same kind of altarpiece with donors we have seen in Netherlandish art. But I would ask you to notice three things. First, the painting may lack the fine detail of **Jan van Eyck** or **Rogier van der Weyden**, but it has a force and human drama that is quite striking. Second, the whole thing is contained within a classical structure based on a Roman triumphal arch. And third, although it is flat, it is designed to make you think it is taking place in a space punched right through the wall of the church. And to do this, Masaccio probably consulted his friend Brunelleschi, who is credited with the invention of linear perspective. More on that in a moment. First, I want to show you Brunelleschi's most spectacular architectural achievement, the dome of Florence Cathedral, which was dedicated in 1436.

24. Florence Cathedral

The *duomo* or Cathedral of Florence is actually a Gothic structure built in the characteristic Tuscan style with black and white patterning all over its exterior. By crowning its East end with a classical dome, Brunelleschi completely transformed the building, as you can see. He had no formal training as an architect, but by this time he had had plenty of practice in smaller commissions, and he continued to read his **Vitruvius** who, as an engineer, was as helpful in his practical advice as he was in philosophy.

25. Text of *Nuper Rosarum Flores*

The dedication of the new dome was performed by Pope Eugene IV, who was at that time living in Florence. The Franco-Flemish composer **Guillaume Dufay** (1397–1474), whose fame was spreading rapidly across Europe, was working in the Papal choir at the time, and received the commission for a festive motet to celebrate the occasion. Its title, *Nuper Rosarum Flores*, refers to a gift of golden roses that the Pope had given for the high altar; at the dedication, the cathedral acquired its present name,

Santa Maria del Fiore, or Mary of the Flower. The motet is based on the Gregorian chant, *Teribilis est locus iste* (Awesome is this place), which is sung four times by the lower voices accompanied by brass instruments, while the upper voices weave around one another carrying the text. There is good evidence to show that Dufay based the proportions of its four sections on the dimensions given for Solomon's Temple in the Bible; the work is more than an impresive sound; it is also an **idea**. Alas, I have to cut from the end of the first section through to the beginning of the final one; the whole thing is on the website. The film that I use for part of my video is from an online travelogue with the sound removed; that too is on the site.

26. Dufay: *Nuper Rosarum Flores*, opening and closing, with views of the Duomo
27. Brunelleschi on perspective

I said that Brunelleschi invented linear perspective. The device no longer exists, but we read of Brunelleschi demonstrating his discoveries by means of a painting of the Florence Baptistery painted on polished silver, which would reflect the sky conditions at any particular moment. He would get people to stand on a particular spot and look at the actual Baptistery through a hole in the back of the picture. Then he would put a mirror in the way, so the person would be looking at his painting, not the building itself. *Voilà*, no difference!

28. Uccello: *Miracle of the Host*, scene 1 (1469, Urbino)
29. Uccello: *Miracle of the Host*, scene 1, with perspective line drawn in

Here's how perspective works. This is a little interior by **Paolo Uccello** (1397–1475), part of a series called the *Miracle of the Desecrated Host*, a story I'd rather not go into. I'm showing it because the room, with its shop counter and tiled floor, is almost Perspective 101. What you do is establish the line of sight of the beholder, and set a **vanishing point** at eye level. Then all the lines going away from him are angled so as to converge on that point.

30. Uccello: *The Flood* (c.1440, Florence, SM Novella)

Uccello was obsessed with perspective. Here is his depiction of *Noah's Ark* from about 1440, in another church in Florence. It is not in good condition, and rather hard to see, but I have made a little video pointing out how he has used what appear to be two separate arks to create an extreme perspective, like a nightmare trapping the people inside. The video also points out the curious object worn by one of the figures around his neck.

31. Uccello: *The Flood*, transformation video

This object is called a *mazzocchio*, apparently a form of Florentine headgear. So why is this person wearing one around his neck?! I think Uccello just threw it in to show that he could. It is a kind of diploma exercise in perspective, and he left several drawings to show how it was done.

32. Uccello: *The Battle of San Romano* (mid-15th century), all zooming to London

For the most part, Uccello did not use his undoubted skill in perspective to recreate reality, but to add an additional playful element to compositions that owed as much to Gothic tradition as the new vision

. In his famous triptych commemorating the Florentine victory over the Sienese at the **Battle of San Romano** in 1432, he uses such devices as the lances (including the broken pieces on the ground) and the hedges separating the distant fields to make a kind of visual pun on the vanishing lines of perspective—and he loved painting dead bodies and kicking horses in extreme foreshortening—but really the pictures are designed very much like medieval tapestries. We'll see more details later.

33. Piero della Francesca: *The Flagellation of Christ* (c.1468, Urbino), with perspective lines

Brunelleschi may be credited with inventing it, but the man who literally wrote the book on perspective was **Piero della Francesca** (1415–92), who was known to his contemporaries equally as a mathematician and painter. Look at this picture, his *Flagellation of Christ*. There is nothing playful about this at all. It is not only meticulously worked out in terms of perspective, but it has been shown to have been constructed on the mathematical principle of the **Golden Ratio**. Perspective is not really used for verisimilitude, but in pursuit of an **idea**, perhaps the idea of perfection. Certainly perspective, as used by Piero, involves a radical change in how a painting is conceived. It is no longer a collection of various things out there that the artist sets down on canvas. Perspective brings the outside *in*, to the retina of the human being observing it. Treated with this degree of rigor, it is essentially a Humanist discipline.

34. Piero della Francesca: *The Flagellation of Christ* (c.1468, Urbino), full screen

Interpretations differ wildly on the meaning of this picture; the Wikipedia article has at least half a dozen of them. More than anything, though, I am struck by the sense that Piero is painting **thought**. The people in front are not even in the same time period as the action in the back. Not only that, but they have no direct contact with other. But they are united in thought.

35. Piero della Francesca: *Brera Madonna* (*Sacra Conversazione*), c.1472, Milan, Brera

That was a one-of-a-kind example, but altarpieces in which the figures are united in silent communion were to become very important as the 15th century moved into the 16th. The type is known as a *sacra conversazione*, which seems an odd name to describe a painting in which no conversation is taking place. Piero made one of the earliest and greatest of them, a work from around 1472 known as the *Brera Madonna*. The kneeling donor is **Federico Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino**; there are various theories about the others and the exact occasion for the commission. But for now all I want to emphasize is the extraordinary atmosphere, the perfection of the perspective, the handling of light and space, and the return to the Classical arch motif, as in Masaccio's *Trinity*, but so much more assured.

36. Piero della Francesca: *Annunciations* (c.1470, Perugia, and fresco c.1460, Arezzo)

The paragraph below is retrospective metadiscourse. I wonder if is needs to be retrospective? And are the two Annunciations best taken here?

I called this class "Sensation and Idea." With the *Ideal City* with which I started the class, and with the Piero *Flagellation* or *Madonna* just now, I have gone about as far as possible with the Idea. But what I love about the *quattrocento* is that the rigor seldom takes over completely. There are always throwbacks to the vivid storytelling of the middle ages or, increasingly, passages of sheer and beauty.

Let's compare these two *Annunciations* by Piero. The one on the right is part of his great fresco cycle in Arezzo (1452–64). You know there is a geometer at work; its architecture seems every bit as calculated as the *Flagellation*. But what amuses me is that he doesn't use it for reality at all. The one on the left is that odd shape because Piero was contracted to finish an altarpiece by another artist, and work within his frame. But now he is using perspective to create a graceful cloister garden, no longer modeled on Roman temples and triumphs, but the light arches used by Brunelleschi in one of his earliest commissions, the *Ospedale degli Innocenti* (Foundling Hospital) in Florence.

  37. Brunelleschi: *Ospedale degli Innocenti* (1419–27)

Let's end the hour with some fun music. Another Franco-Flemish composer working in Italy, like Guillaume Dufay, was **Josquin des Prez** (1440–1521). You will remember the *Ave Maria* that he wrote in Milan; here is a brief snippet.

  38. Josquin: *Ave Maria, virgo serena*, brief snippet
  39. Text of *Scaramella*

Well, he didn't only write sacred music; listen to him when he lets his hair down! This is an Italian popular song of the time about a rogue called *Scaramella*, who goes to war with the intention of having a good time. The group is **Micrologus**, and whoever put together the video chose details from the Uccello pictures. Keep an ear open for all the canons as you listen.

  40. Josquin: *Scaramella*, with Uccello details
  41. Intermission title (Piero della Francesca)

D. Music, Landscape, Love

  42. Section title 4 (Titian: *Venus and the Lute Player*)

We move now to **Venice**, which is virtually a separate country. And once more we start with music.

  43. De la Rue: *Tous les regres*, with Bellini angels
  44. Bellini: *San Giobbe Altarpiece* (1487, Venice Accademia)

The angels come from this painting by **Giovanni Bellini** (1435–1516). It is another *sacra conversazione* like Piero della Francesca's, another Roman barrel-vaulted arch like Masaccio's. But its oil-painting technique and color owe more to Netherlandish art than to Central Italy, which is not surprising, since Venice was a significant trading partner of Bruges and Ghent, sending silks from the East to be woven into rich brocades. And though you get angel musicians in Florentine art too, they are especially important here, because Venice was an especially musical city.

45. Ottaviano Petrucci: page from *Harmonice Musices Odhecaton* (1501)

It was in Venice, in 1501, that the first printed book of music other than plainsong appeared: the *Harmonice Musices Odhecaton* (One Hundred Songs of Harmonic Music) published by **Ottaviano Petrucci** (1466–1539). Almost none of it was Italian music, however; virtually all the pieces are by Franco-Flemish composers like **Josquin**. The piece we have just heard is *Tous les regres* (All my regrets) by **Pierre de la Rue** (1452–1518).

46. Bellini: *San Zaccaria Altarpiece* (1505, Venice, San Zaccaria)

The point I am making here is that, while in Florence we saw the art of the **Idea** more or less dominating everything, Venice was much more dedicated to the art of the **Senses**—a quality that pretty much remained true of the city for succeeding centuries as well. Bellini used the music-making angel in at least one other altarpiece as well, this one from a quarter-century later, in the church of San Zaccaria. Now it has all been opened up, with the light and fresh air streaming in, with glimpses of the landscape outside.

47. Bellini: *St. Francis in Ecstasy* (1480, NY Frick)

I mentioned last week that landscapes were something of a Netherlandish specialty. They do occur in Florentine painting, but they are less common. In hedonistic Venice, however, the pleasure of the landscape becomes an important element in the painting, and in this one by Bellini it is virtually the entire subject. The topic is Saint Francis's vision of the miracle of nature, and Bellini expresses it by all the detail in a scene lit by the golden light of dawn. At this stage of his career, he was still somewhat influenced by the Gothic; the rocks of the cave do not have the naturalness of the background….

48. Bellini: *Madonna del Prato* (1505, London NG)

…but by the time he painted the *Madonna of the Meadow* a quarter-century later, the landscape has become entirely natural view of the countryside north of Venice, in the foothills of the Dolomites.

49. Bellini: *Nude Woman Looking in a Mirror* (1515, Vienna KHM)

Landscape, color, and music are not the only elements of Venetian sensuality; there is also **sex**. Bellini was in his eighties, however, before he painted his first nude, this *Woman with a Mirror* of 1515, now in Vienna. It is not so much titillating as a gloriously honest. Note the splendidly simple landscape, the Netherlandish detail of the brocade, and the interplay with the second mirror on the wall behind her.

50. Bellini and Titian: *Feast of the Gods* (1514, Washington NGA), full then zoom in
51. Titian: *Bacchanal on Andros* (1526, Madrid Prado)

There are some at least partial nudes in this late picture in the National Gallery. One of Bellini's rare mythological subjects, it shows the Greek Gods on a sort of picnic—that hedonistic side again—and contains Bellini's most splendidly assertive landscape. At least the master designed it; we know it to have been completed by his pupil **Titian** (Tiziano Vecellio, 1485–1576). He would go on to paint his own version of a very similar subject a decade later. We will see a couple more of his nudes in a moment.

52. Giorgione: *La tempesta* (1508, Venice Accademia)

I couldn't talk about Venetian landscape and Venetian nudes without showing one of the most iconic yet enigmatic paintings of the period that combines both themes: *La tempesta* (the storm) by **Giorgione** (Giorgio da Castelfranco, 1477–1510). I spent some time in another course wondering what it was all about; for now, the only point I am making is that it is intensely atmospheric and both threatening and erotic. Whatever **Idea** the subject may have represented is now lost to us; what it left is pure **Sensuality**.

53. Giorgione: *Sleeping Venus* ("Dresden Venus"), 1510, Dresden

Giorgione is also famous for painting the first ever female nude as a subject in its own right, the famous *Dresden Venus*. However, he is also suffering from the fact that many of the works previously attributed to him are being whittled down by modern scholarship. It is now thought that the entire landscape background to this picture was painted by Titian. Titian also painted his own variant on the Giorgione, moving the figure indoors and waking her up; I'll show it in a moment.

54. ~~Giorgione~~/Titian: *Pastoral Concert* (c.1509 Paris Louvre)

Another foundation stone of Giorgione's fame used to be this *Pastoral Concert* in the Louvre; it is this that Manet is parodying in his *Déjeuner sur l'herbe.* But now it has pretty definitively been reassigned to Titian. No matter; it is the perfect icon of the Venetian association between landscape, music, and sex.

55. Guarini: *Tirsi morir volea*, text

To celebrate this, I am going ahead to the middle of the century with a setting of this well-known poem by **Giovanni Battista Guarini** (1538–1612). For reasons that should be obvious, it was a favorite with 16th-century madrigal composers; I believe it had 27 different settings. The one I am going to play, in part, is by yet another Franco-Flemish composer, **Giaches de Wert** (1535–96). The text is quite racy, based on the pun that the word "die" can be used in a sexual as well as a literal sense. I pick it up at the point where the two of them are clearly getting it on. They quickly reach their goal, and there is a pause. Then the voices sing the last three lines, constantly overlapping the phrase "Che per ancor morir," only to die again… and again… and again. The images are one Giorgione and three Titians.

56. Giaches de Wert: *Tirsi morir volea*, last two sections

E. Hosanna!

57. Section title E (as below)
58. Sistine Chapel and San Marco

The last city in my whirlwind tour will be Rome. But first, I want to try a musical experiment. I am going to play two settings of the same text, the *Hosanna* section of the Mass, both from the middle of the century. One was written for the Basilica of San Marco in Venice, the other for the Sistine Chapel in Rome; I wonder if you can guess which is which? The first recording has 12 singers, the other 6.

<u>What did you guess</u>? I hope you heard the relative simplicity of the first and greater richness of the second, with the voices interlacing and soaring around one another. This second one was by **Adrian Willaert** (1490–1562), whose song accompanied the Bruegel paintings last week. He was appointed *maestro di cappella* at Saint Marks at the age of 37, and reigned there for 35 years, establishing a musical tradition that was to last for centuries to come. The first piece was by **Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina** (1525–94), the leading musician of his time and the first Italian composer of international significance since Landini two centuries before. We shall see a bit of his mass performed *in situ* to end the class.

F. Synthesis

==To recap, I said that the chief National Characteristic of Italian art in the Renaissance is the painting of an **Idea** rather than mere **Sensation**. I have shown, I hope, that in the shift to this approach in *quattrocento* Florence, Idea often eclipsed Sensation. I have also tried to show that in Venice, approaching the *cinquecento*, the sensory elements generally had the upper hand.== I want now to look at one artist of the High Renaissance (the first decades of the 1500s) whom I think managed a particularly well-balanced synthesis between the two, a young man who found his way from Urbino in central Italy to Rome. This was **Raphael** (Raffaello Santi, 1483–1520).

I can't think of any Renaissance painting more about an **Idea** than this fresco executed by Raphael in the Vatican between 1509 and 1510. Its subject is and imaginary debate between Saints, Popes, Bishops, and all the Fathers of the Church about the doctrine of **Transubstantiation**—that the wafer of bread offered at the Mass is *literally* turned into the Body of Christ once it consecrated. I must admit I am not a Catholic, but a more abstract idea would be hard to imagine, and the idea of this world conference to debate it is equally abstract. Raphael, I'm sure, was told what to paint and whom to put in, at least for the major figures. But what amazes me is that he made it so human, indeed so beautiful.

Take just the two areas I outlined in red. The beautiful young man taking the minutes is a joy to behold, and there is another beautiful youth at the bottom right. Look how lovely is that little landscape with what looks like a church under construction. And how vigorous and varied is the group just below it, with **Fra Angelico** at the extreme left, and possible the architect **Donato Bramante** (1444–1514) leaning

over the balustrade. I don't know if anyone has identified the blonde youth; to me, he looks a bit like Raphael's friend, the young banker **Bindo Altoviti**, whose portrait hangs in Washington.

65. Raphael: *The School of Athens* (1509–10, Vatican)

A conference on Catholic doctrine is the kind of thing you might expect at the Vatican, but the subject of the fresco on the wall opposite is, if not pagan, then certainly pre-Christian. Called *The School of Athens*, it is another imaginary debate between all the philosophers of antiquity. So we have another synthesis, this time between the Christian and Classical worlds. On the level of overall design, Raphael is taking the developments of the previous century to an extreme: we have a vast vaulted hall taken once again from Roman arches, the architectural orders straight out of **Vitruvius**, all executed in perfect perspective.

66. Raphael: *The School of Athens*, portraits

Yet on a human level, the work is full of portraits. We can identify **Leonardo da Vinci**, **Michelangelo**, **Bramante** again, and a portrait of **Raphael** himself. Bramante, who like Raphael came from Urbino, was a special friend and possibly a relative. He appears to have been a mentor to the younger man in Rome, smuggling him in to see the Sistine Chapel after hours, for example. At the time, Bramante was working on the new Saint Peters, and the architecture of *The School of Athens* is surely a tribute to his design. When Bramante died in 1514, Raphael himself took over as architect, though his design was never built.

67. Raphael: Marriage of the Virgin (1504, Milan), with Bramante: *Tempietto* (1510)

Bramante did not live to see his design for St. Peter's completed, but at about this time he did complete what you could almost think of as a scale model for an ideal church, the little circular *Tempietto* over the assumed tomb of Saint Peter at another church in Rome. It so happens that Raphael had included a circular church in the background of one of his earlier paintings, the *Marriage of the Virgin* (a.k.a *Lo Sposalizio*) in Milan. Raphael's temple would have been bigger, but then he never had to build it. It was also more *quattrocento* in feel, more elegant, more graceful.

68. Raphael: Drawing for *La belle jardinière* (1507, Paris Louvre)
69. Raphael: Two drawings

Grace is a quality you constantly associate with Raphael. It's what keeps even his most idea-driven works from becoming arid. It's what shows in the limpid quality of his many *Madonnas,* and in the simple charm of their landscape backgrounds. And it shows especially in his drawings, in which you see him trying out variants of his final design, but which are often totally harmonious works in themselves. I read that he was the first artist to use female models for female subjects, rather than working everything out from the young men in his studio; you can see that in Michelangelo; it would be unthinkable for Raphael.

70. Raphael: *Baldassare Castiglione* (c.1515, Louvre); *La donna Velata* (1516, Pitti)

I end with two portraits, because Raphael was above all human. He painted the writer **Baldassare Castiglione** (1478–1529) not as the future author of that great book of ethics and etiquette, *The Courtier* (1528), but because they were old friends. Raphael, who grew up in the courts of central Italy, must

have had excellent manners to have worked so easily with his patrons and made so many friends; it is not hard to see the older man as something of a mentor. And although traditionally called only *La donna velata* (the veiled lady), the sitter on the right is seen in several of his other pictures, and has been traditionally identified as **Margherita Luti**, a baker's daughter (*la fornarina*) who (it is said) repeatedly refused to marry him, but remained as his mistress.

71. Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525–94)

To end with some music, let's return to that **Palestrina** mass we sampled earlier, his famous *Missa Papae Marcelli*. Dedicated to a short-lived Pope, Marcellus II, Palestrina presented it to the final session of the **Council of Trent** in 1563. They were debating the propriety of using polyphonic music in church, because its complexity could detract from clear understanding of the words, and its decorative quality could get too secular. Palestrina's writing, which could be simple without becoming sterile, effectively silenced the critics. After a century and a half of Franco-Flemish dominance, Italian composers were back on the map. [The conductor is far too energetic for such serene music.]

72. Palestrina: *Missa Papae Marcelli*, excerpt
73. Closing title (detail from *The Triumph of Galatea*)