

RAPHAEL. Of the three major figures of the High Renaissance school (Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael), Raphael (pronounced rah-fa-yell; 1483–1520) would be voted Most Popular. While the other two were revered and their work admired, Raphael was adored. A contemporary of the three men, Vasari, who wrote the first art history, said Raphael was “so gentle and so charitable that even animals loved him.”

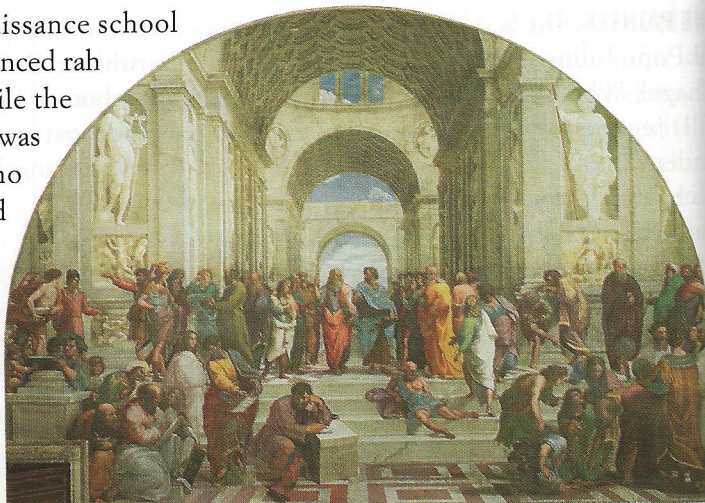
Raphael’s father, a mediocre painter, taught his precocious son the rudiments of painting. By the age of 17, Raphael was rated an independent master. Called to Rome by the pope at age 26 to decorate the Vatican rooms, Raphael completed the frescoes, aided by an army of fifty students, the same year Michelangelo finished the Sistine ceiling. “All he knows,” said Michelangelo, “he learned from me.”

The rich, handsome, wildly successful Raphael went from triumph to triumph, a star of the brilliant papal court. He was a devoted lady’s man, “very amorous,” said Vasari, with “secret pleasures beyond all measure.” When he caught a fever after a midnight assignation and died on his thirty-seventh birthday, the entire court “plunged into grief.”

Raphael’s art most completely expressed all the qualities of the High Renaissance. From Leonardo he borrowed pyramidal composition and learned to model faces with light and shadow (*chiaroscuro*). From Michelangelo, Raphael adapted full-bodied, dynamic figures and the *contrapposto* pose.

TITIAN: THE FATHER OF MODERN PAINTING. Like his fellow Venetian painters, Titian (pronounced TISH-un; 1490?–1576), who dominated the art world in the city for sixty years, used strong colors as his main expressive device. First he covered the surface of the canvas with red for warmth, then he painted both background and figures in vivid hues and toned them down with thirty or forty layers of glazes. Through this painstaking method, he was able to portray any texture completely convincingly, whether polished metal, shiny silk, red-gold hair, or warm flesh. One of the first to abandon wood panels, Titian established oil on canvas as the typical medium.

After his wife died in 1530, Titian’s paintings became more muted, almost monochromatic. Extremely prolific until his late 80s, as his sight failed Titian loosened his brushstrokes. At the end they were broad, thickly loaded with paint, and slashing. A pupil reported that Titian “painted more with his fingers than with his brushes.”



Raphael, “School of Athens,” 1510–11, Vatican, Rome. Raphael’s masterpiece embodies the High Renaissance in its balance, sculptural quality, architectural perspective, and fusion of pagan and Christian elements.

Titian, “Bacchanal of the Adrians,” 1518, Prado, Madrid. This pagan wine party contains the major ingredients of Titian’s early style: dazzling contrasting colors, ample female forms, and asymmetric compositions.



THE VENETIAN SCHOOL

While artists working in Florence and Rome concentrated on sculptural forms and epic themes, Venetian painters were fascinated with color, texture, and mood. Giovanni Bellini (1430–1516) was the first Italian master of the new oil painting technique. Titian’s men-

tor, Bellini was also the first to integrate figure and landscape. Giorgione (1476–1510) aroused emotion through light and color. In his “Tempest,” a menacing storm cloud created a sense of gloom and mystery. After Titian — the most famous of Venetian artists — Tin-

toretto and Veronese continued the large-scale, majestic style of deep coloring and theatricality. In the eighteenth century, the Rococo painter Tiepolo carried on the Venetian tradition, as did Guardi and Canaletto in their atmospheric cityscapes.

ARCHITECTURE IN THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE. Informed by the same principles of harmonious geometry that underlay painting and sculpture, architecture recovered the magnificence of ancient Rome. The most noted Renaissance architects were Alberti, Brunelleschi, Bramante, and Palladio.

A writer, painter, sculptor, and architect, Alberti (pronounced al BEAR ee; 1404–72) was the Renaissance's major theorist who wrote treatises on painting, sculpture, and architecture. He downplayed art's religious purpose and urged artists to study "sciences" like history, poetry, and mathematics as building blocks. Alberti wrote the first systematic guide to perspective and provided sculptors with rules for ideal human proportions.

Another multifaceted Renaissance man, Brunelleschi (pronounced brew LESS kee; 1377–1446) was skilled as a goldsmith, sculptor, mathematician, clock builder, and architect. But he is best known as the father of modern engineering. Not only did he discover mathematical perspective, he also championed the central-plan church design that replaced the medieval basilica. He was capable of constructing a dome for the Florence Cathedral, called

the Eighth Wonder of the World. His inspiration was to build two shells, each supporting the other, crowned by a lantern stabilizing the whole. In designing the Pazzi Chapel, Brunelleschi used Classical motifs as surface decoration. His design illustrates the revival of Roman forms and Renaissance emphasis on symmetry and regularity.

In 1502, Bramante (pronounced brah MAHN tee; 1444–1514) built the Tempietto ("Little Temple") in Rome on the site where St. Peter was crucified. Although tiny, it was the perfect prototype of the domed central plan church. It expressed the Renaissance ideals of order, simplicity, and harmonious proportions.

Known for his villas and palaces, Palladio (pronounced pah LAH dee oh; 1508–90) was enormously influential in later centuries through his treatise, *Four Books on Architecture*. Neoclassical revivalists like Thomas Jefferson and Christopher Wren, architect of St. Paul's in London, used Palladio's rule book as a guide. The Villa Rotonda incorporated Greek and Roman details like porticos with Ionic columns, a flattened dome like the Pantheon, and rooms arranged symmetrically around a central rotunda.

THE FOUR R'S OF RENAISSANCE ARCHITECTURE

The four R's of Renaissance architecture are Rome, Rule, Reason, and Rhythmic.

ROME In keeping with their passion for the classical, Renaissance architects systematically measured Roman ruins to copy their style and proportion. They copied elements like the rounded arch, concrete construction, domed rotunda, portico, barrel vault, and column.

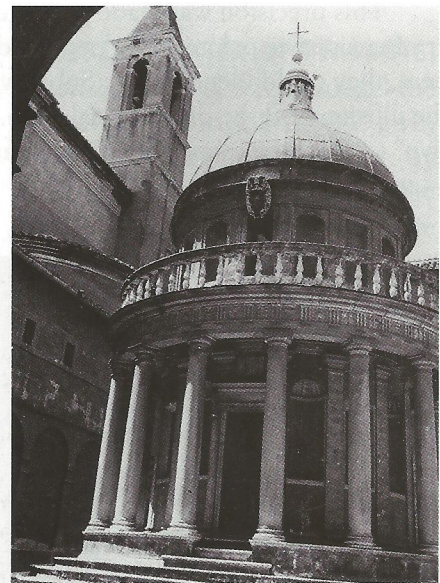
RULES Since architects considered themselves artists rather than mere builders, they based their work on theories, as expressed in various treatises. They formulated aesthetic rules that were widely followed.

REASON Theories emphasized architecture's rationality, grounded in science, math, and engineering. Cold reason replaced the mystical approach of the Middle Ages.

RHYTHMIC Architects depended on arithmetic to create beauty and harmony. A system of ideal proportions related parts of a building to each other in rational ratios, such as the 2:1 ratio of a nave width to the height of a church. Layouts relied on geometric shapes, especially the circle and square.



Brunelleschi, Pazzi Chapel, 1440–61, Florence.



Bramante, Tempietto, 1444–1514, Rome.



Palladio, Villa Rotonda, begun 1550, Vicenza.

THE NORTHERN RENAISSANCE

In the Netherlands as well as in Florence, new developments in art began about 1420. But what was called the Northern Renaissance was not a rebirth in the Italian sense. Artists in the Netherlands — modern Belgium (then called Flanders) and Holland — lacked Roman ruins to rediscover. Still, their break with the Gothic style produced a brilliant flowering of the arts.

While the Italians looked to Classical antiquity for inspiration, northern Europeans looked to nature. Without Classical sculpture to teach them ideal proportions, they painted reality exactly as it appeared, in a detailed, realistic style. Portraits were such faithful likenesses that Charles VI of France sent a painter to three different royal courts to paint prospective brides, basing his decision solely on the portraits.

This precision was made possible by the new oil medium, which Northern Renaissance painters first perfected. Since oil took longer to dry than tempera, they could blend colors. Subtle variations in light and shade heightened the illusion of three-dimensional form. They also used “atmospheric perspective” — the increasingly hazy appearance of objects farthest from the viewer — to suggest depth.

THE RENAISSANCE IN THE LOW COUNTRIES

In Holland and Flanders, cities like Bruges, Brussels, Ghent, Louvain, and Haarlem rivaled Florence, Rome, and Venice as centers of artistic excellence. The trademark of these northern European artists was their incredible ability to portray nature realistically, down to the most minute detail.



JAN VAN EYCK. Credited with inventing oil painting, the Flemish artist Hubert van Eyck was so idolized for his discovery that his right arm was preserved as a holy relic. His brother, Jan van Eyck (c.1390–1441), about whom more is known, used the new medium to achieve a peak of realism.

Trained as a miniaturist and illuminator of manuscripts, Jan van Eyck painted convincingly the most microscopic details in brilliant, glowing color. One of the first masters of the new art of portrait painting, van Eyck included extreme details like the beginning of stubble on his subject's chin. His “Man in a Red Turban,” which may be a self-portrait (1433), was the earliest known painting in which the sitter looked at the spectator. In one of the most celebrated paintings of the Northern Renaissance, “The Arnolfini Wedding,” van Eyck captures surface appearance and textures precisely and renders effects of both direct and diffused light.

Van Eyck, “Arnolfini Wedding,”

1434, NG, London. A master of realism, van Eyck recreated the marriage scene, in miniature in the mirror. Virtually every object symbolizes the painting's theme — the sanctity of marriage — with the dog representing fidelity and the cast-off shoes holy ground.

As the Renaissance spread north from Italy, it took different forms.

ITALIAN RENAISSANCE ART

VS.

NORTHERN RENAISSANCE ART

SPECIALTY:	Ideal beauty	Intense realism
STYLE:	Simplified forms, measured proportions	Lifelike features, unflattering honesty
SUBJECTS:	Religious and mythological scenes	Religious and domestic scenes
FIGURES:	Heroic male nudes	Prosperous citizens, peasants
PORTRAITS:	Formal, reserved	Reveal individual personality
TECHNIQUE:	Fresco, tempera, and oil paintings	Oil paintings on wood panels
EMPHASIS:	Underlying anatomical structure	Visible appearance
BASIS OF ART:	Theory	Observation
COMPOSITION:	Static, balanced	Complex, irregular

BOSCH: GARDEN OF THE GROTESQUE. It's not hard to understand why twentieth-century Surrealists claimed Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516) as their patron saint. The modern artists exploited irrational dream imagery that hardly matched Bosch's bizarre imagination.

Bosch's moralistic paintings suggested inventive torments meted out as punishment for sinners. Grotesque fantasy images — such as hybrid monsters, half-human, half-animal — inhabited his weird, unsettling landscapes. Although modern critics have been unable to decipher his underlying meanings, it seems clear Bosch believed that corrupt mankind, seduced by evil, should suffer calamitous consequences.

Bosch, detail, "The Garden of Earthly Delights," c. 1500, Prado, Madrid. Bosch probably intended this as an allegory, warning against the dangers of eroticism. Such disturbing imagery made Bosch a forerunner of Surrealism.



Bruegel, "Hunters in the Snow," 1565, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Bruegel portrayed peasants both honestly and satirically.

BRUEGEL: PAINTER OF PEASANTS.

Flemish painter Pieter Bruegel the Elder (pronounced BROY gull; c.1525–69) was influenced by Bosch's pessimism and satiric approach. Bruegel took peasant life as his subject. In his scenes of humble folk working, feasting, or dancing, the satiric edge always appeared. "The Peasant Wedding," for example, features guests eating and drinking with gluttonous absorption. Besides elevating genre painting (scenes of everyday life) to the stature of high art, Bruegel also illustrated proverbs, such as "The Blind Leading the Blind," with horrific, bestial facial expressions typical of Bosch's Biblical scenes.

Bruegel's most famous painting, "Hunters in the Snow," came from a series depicting man's activities during the months of the year. His preoccupation with peasant life is shown in the exhausted hunters plodding homeward, silhouetted against the snow. Bruegel used atmospheric perspective — from sharp foreground to hazy background — to give the painting depth.

THE GERMAN RENAISSANCE

After lagging behind the innovative Netherlanders, German artists began to lead the Northern School. In the first quarter of the sixteenth century, Germans suddenly assimilated the pictorial advances of their Southern peers—Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael. Simultaneous with Italy's peak of artistic creativity was Germany's own High Renaissance, marked by Grünewald's searing religious paintings, Dürer's technically perfect prints, and Holbein's unsurpassed portraits.

HOLBEIN: PRINCELY PORTRAITS. Hans Holbein the Younger (1497–1543), is known as one of the greatest portraitists ever. Like Dürer, he blended the strengths of North and South, linking the German skill with lines and precise realism to the balanced composition, chiaroscuro, sculptural form, and perspective of Italy.

Although born in Germany, Holbein first worked in Basel. When the Reformation decreed church decoration to be “popery” and his commissions disappeared, Holbein sought his fortune in England. His patron, the humanist scholar Erasmus, recommended him to the English cleric Sir Thomas More with the words, “Here [in Switzerland] the arts are out in the cold.” Holbein's striking talent won him the position of court painter to Henry VIII, for whom he did portraits of the king and four of his wives.

“The French Ambassadors” (see p. 32) illustrates Holbein's virtuoso technique, with its linear patterning in the Oriental rug and damask curtain, accurate textures of fur and drapery, faultless perspective of the marble floor, sumptuous enameled color, and minute surface realism. The object in the foreground (a distorted skull) and numerous scholarly implements show the Northern penchant for symbolic knickknacks. Holbein depicted faces with the same accuracy as Dürer but with a neutral expression characteristic of Italy rather than the intensity of Dürer's portraits. Holbein's exquisite draftsmanship set the standard for portraits, the most important form of painting in England for the next three centuries.

Dürer, “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse,”
c. 1497–98, woodcut, MMA, NY. Dürer used fine, engravinglike lines for shading. In this doomsday vision, the final Four Horsemen—war, pestilence, famine, and death—trample humanity.



DÜRER: GRAPHIC ART. The first Northern artist to be also a Renaissance man, Albrecht Dürer (pronounced DEWR er; 1471–1528) combined the Northern gift for realism with the breakthroughs of the Italian Renaissance. Called the “Leonardo of the North” for the diversity of his interests, Dürer was fascinated with nature and did accurate botanical studies of plants. Believing art should be based on careful scientific observation, he wrote, “Art stands firmly fixed in nature, and he who can find it there, he has it.” This curiosity led, unfortunately, to his demise, as he insisted on tramping through a swamp to see the body of a whale and caught a fatal fever.

Dürer took as his mission the enlightenment of his Northern colleagues about the discoveries of the South. He published treatises on perspective and ideal proportion. He also assumed the mantle of the artist as cultivated gentleman-scholar, raising the artist's stature from mere craftsman to near prince. He was the first to be fascinated with his own image, leaving a series of self-portraits (the earliest done when he was 13). In his “Self-Portrait” of 1500, he painted himself in a Christ-like pose, indicating the exalted status of the artist, not to mention his high opinion of himself.

What assured Dürer's reputation as the greatest artist of the Northern Renaissance was his graphic work. Before Dürer, woodcuts were primitive studies of black and white contrasts. He adapted the form-creating hatching of engraving to the woodcut, achieving a sliding scale of light and shade. Like an engraver, he used dense lines to render differences in texture and tone as subtle as any oil painting. Dürer was the first to use printmaking as a major medium for art.

MAKING PRINTS: THE INVENTION OF GRAPHIC ARTS

One of the most popular (and still affordable) forms of art collecting in recent years has been limited-edition prints, each signed by the artist who oversees the reproduction process. The art of printmaking first flourished during the Northern Renaissance.

WOODCUT

The oldest technique for making prints (long known in China) was the woodcut, which originated in Germany about 1400. In this method, a design was drawn on a smooth block of wood, then the parts to remain white (called "negative space") were cut away, leaving the design standing up in relief. This was then inked and pressed against paper to produce thousands of copies sold for a few pennies each. For the first time, art was accessible to the masses and artists could learn from reproductions of each others' work. Once printing with movable type was developed around the mid-fifteenth century, books illustrated with woodcuts became popular.

Woodcuts reached a peak with Dürer but were gradually replaced by the more flexible and refined method of engraving. In Japan, the colored woodcut was always very popular. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Europe, the woodcut enjoyed a revival, with Munch, Gauguin, and the German Expressionists adopting the medium for its jagged intensity.

ENGRAVING

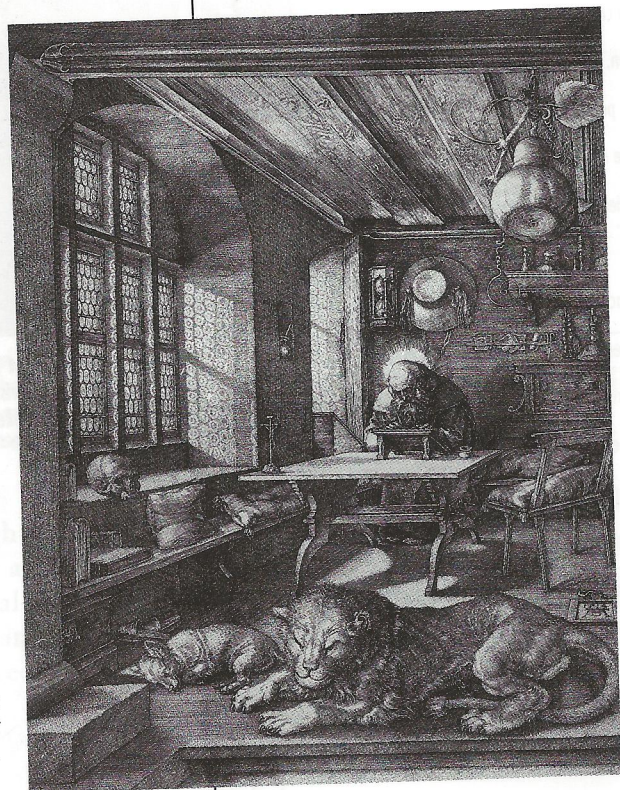
Began about 1430, engraving was a technique opposite to the woodcut's raised relief. The method was one of several in printmaking known as intaglio (ink transferred from below the surface), where prints are made from lines or crevices in a plate. In engraving, grooves were cut into a metal (usually copper) plate with a steel tool called a burin. Ink was rubbed into the grooves, the surface of the plate wiped clean, and the plate put through a press to transfer the incised design to paper. Forms could be modeled with fine-hatched lines to suggest shading. This technique flowered in the early sixteenth century with Dürer, whose use of the burin was so sophisticated, he could approximate on a copper plate the effects of light and mass achieved by the Dutch in oil and Italians in fresco.

Graphic arts techniques that became popular in later centuries include DRY-POINT, ETCHING, LITHOGRAPHY, and SILKSCREENING (see p. 109).

Dürer, "Saint Jerome," 1514, engraving, MMA, NY. *Through straight and curved hatching and crosshatching, Dürer depicted light streaming through bottle-glass windows, casting accurate shadows.*

OTHERS IN THE GERMAN RENAISSANCE

Besides Dürer and Holbein, notable artists were Matthias Grünewald (c. 1480–1528) and Albrecht Altdorfer (1480–1538). Grünewald's masterpiece, "The Eisenheim Altarpiece," shows the horror of the Crucifixion and glory of the Resurrection in a tableau of overwhelming power. Altdorfer, representative of the Danube Style, known for its moody landscapes, is credited with the first pure landscape painting in Western art.



MANNERISM AND THE LATE RENAISSANCE

Between the High Renaissance and the Baroque, from the death of Raphael in 1520 until 1600, art was at an impasse. Michelangelo and Raphael had been called “divino.” Kings begged them for the slightest sketch. All problems of representing reality had been solved and art had reached a peak of perfection and harmony. So what now?

The answer: replace harmony with dissonance, reason with emotion, and reality with imagination. In an effort to be original, Late Renaissance, or Mannerist, artists abandoned realism based on observation of nature. Straining after novelty, they exaggerated the ideal beauty represented by Michelangelo and Raphael, seeking instability instead of equilibrium.

The times favored such disorder. Rome had been sacked by the Germans and Spaniards and the church had lost its authority during the Reformation. In the High Renaissance, when times were more stable, picture compositions were symmetrical and weighted toward the center. In the Late Renaissance, compositions were oblique, with a void in the center and figures crowded around — often cut off by — the edge of the frame. It was as if world chaos and loss of a unifying faith (“The center cannot hold,” as W. B. Yeats later said) made paintings off-balance and diffuse.

The name “Mannerism” came from the Italian term “di maniera,” meaning a work of art done according to an acquired style rather than depicting nature. Mannerist paintings are readily identifiable because their style is so predictable. Figures writhe and twist in unnecessary contrapposto. Bodies are distorted — generally elongated but sometimes grossly muscular. Colors are lurid, heightening the impression of tension, movement, and unreal lighting.

Notable Mannerists were Pontormo and Rosso (see sidebar); Bronzino, whose precious, elegant portraits featured long necks and sloping shoulders; Parmigianino, whose “Madonna with the Long Neck” displayed similar physical distortions; and Benvenuto Cellini, a sculptor and goldsmith known for his arrogant autobiography.

LIFE ON THE EDGE

Mannerists deliberately cultivated eccentricity in their work. Some were equally odd in their private lives. Rosso, who lived with a baboon, was said to have dug up corpses, fascinated with the process of decomposition. His canvases often had a sinister quality, as when he painted St. Anne like a haggard witch. On seeing one of his macabre works, a priest ran from the room shrieking the painter was possessed by the devil.

Pontormo was certifiably mad. A hypochondriac obsessed by fear of death, he lived alone in an especially tall house he had built to isolate himself. His garret room was accessible only by a ladder that he pulled up after himself. His paintings showed this bizarre sensibility. The perspective was irrational and his colors — lavender, coral, puce, poisonous green — unsettling. His figures often looked about wildly, as if sharing their creator’s paranoid anxiety.



Tintoretto, “The Last Supper,” 1594, San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice. *Tintoretto’s (1518–94) crowded, dramatic canvases displayed obvious Mannerist traits like a plunging diagonal perspective, making the picture seem off-balance. He used light for emotional effect, from the darkest black to the incandescent light emanating from Christ’s head and sketchy, chalk-white angels.*

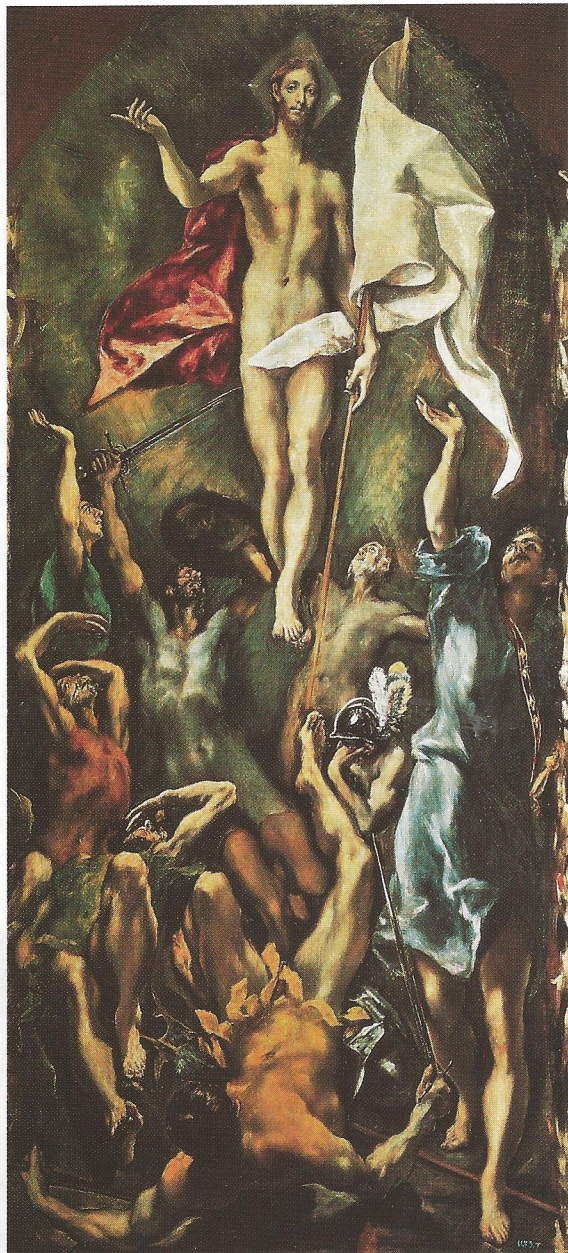
THE SPANISH RENAISSANCE

The most remarkable figure of the Renaissance working in Spain was the painter El Greco (1541–1614). Born in Crete (then a possession of Venice), he received his first training in the flat, highly patterned Byzantine style. After coming to Venice, he appropriated Titian's vivid color and Tintoretto's dramatic lighting and was also influenced by Michelangelo, Raphael, and the Mannerists in Rome. His real name was Domenikos Theotocopoulos, but he was nicknamed "The Greek" and went to Toledo to work when about age 35.

At the time, Spain was in the grip of a religious frenzy, with the Counter Reformation and Inquisition holding sway. Many of El Greco's surreal, emotionally intense paintings reflected this climate of extreme zealotry.

A supremely self-confident artist, El Greco once said Michelangelo couldn't paint and offered to swamp "The Last Judgment." He also said he detested walking in daylight because "the daylight blinds the light within." The most striking characteristic of his paintings comes from this inner light. An unearthly illumination flickers over the canvases, making his style the most original of the Renaissance.

Critics have disputed whether El Greco should be considered a Mannerist; some claim he was too idiosyncratic to be classified. His art manifested certain undeniable Mannerist attributes, such as an unnatural light of uncertain origin and harsh colors like strong pink, acid green, and brilliant yellow and blue. His figures were distorted and elongated — their scale variable — and the compositions full of swirling movement. Like the Mannerists, El Greco — in his religious



El Greco, "Resurrection," c. 1597–1604, Prado, Madrid. *Many characteristics of El Greco's late, mystical style are evident here: immensely long bodies, harsh light as if from a threatening storm, strong colors, twisted figures, sense of movement, and intense emotionalism.*

paintings although not his portraits — cared little for accurately representing the visual world. He preferred to create an emotion-laden vision of celestial ecstasy.

BEAUTY SECRETS OF THE SPANISH LADIES

Ridiculously elongated hands and slender figures were a hallmark of Mannerism. The fingers in an El Greco painting are characteristically long, thin, and expressive. Spanish ladies of the time so admired refined hands that they tied their hands to the top of the bedstead at night to make them pale and bloodless.