



Family Matters

As a teenager, Artemisia Gentileschi painted this image of the Virgin Mary and infant Jesus. Portrayed with sensitivity beyond her years, it affirms skills nurtured by her artist-father and foretells her future success.



Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), 1609-10

Take a closer look

Here, **Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1656)** expressed both the secular and sacred qualities of her subjects. Mary's simple garb and surroundings suggest humility, while her solid physicality anchors her in this world. Yet Gentileschi subtly reminds us this is no ordinary mother and child. Cherries reference heaven, and halos signify holiness.

Something to talk about

Depictions of the Egyptian goddess Isis holding her infant son Horus likely inspired early Christian images of the Virgin and Child. Likewise, such religious portrayals influenced everyday representations of maternity. View Mary Cassatt's *Mother Louise Nursing Her Child* on the third floor. In what ways does it relate to Gentileschi's painting? Where does it depart?

Who knew?

Hindered by 17th-century laws not applicable to male artists, women could not independently purchase art materials, sign contracts, or travel. Only admission to an art academy would quash these restrictions. Gentileschi, the first woman elected to the Florentine academy, thereby enjoyed unprecedented autonomy.

Artemisia Gentileschi, *Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino)*, 1609-10; Oil on canvas; 46½ × 33⅞ inches; Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence; inv. 1890 no. 2129

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