



## Painting Prodigy

Elisabetta Sirani was a prolific young painter from the progressive city of Bologna, Italy. Trained as an artist by her father, Sirani produced almost 200 artworks between the age of 17 and her untimely death 10 years later.



## Virgin and Child, 1663

### Take a closer look

In this painting, **Elisabetta Sirani (1638–1665)** portrayed an intimate moment between a loving mother and child. Mary wears a turban favored by Bolognese peasant women. The garland of roses foreshadows both the crown she will wear as Queen of Heaven and her son's crown of thorns.

### Something to talk about

In painting this Christian subject, Sirani emphasized the humanity rather than the divinity of the Holy Family. If you did not know the title of the work, would you still recognize the subject? Why or why not?

### Who knew?

Sirani completed paintings very quickly. But her speed, together with her gender, led to accusations that her father was lending a hand. To counter this suspicion, Sirani opened her studio, inviting the public to observe her at work.

Elisabetta Sirani, *Virgin and Child*, 1663; Oil on canvas; 34 x 27½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Painting conservation funds generously provided by the Southern California State Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts; Photograph by Lee Stalworth

