

NATIONAL MUSEUM *of WOMEN in the ARTS*

Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea

Educator's Resource Packet



Dear Educators,

We are delighted to present this educator's resource packet, which was created in conjunction with the special exhibition *Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea*, on view at National Museum of Women in the Arts from December 5, 2014, through April 12, 2015.

Picturing Mary primarily explores the visual language developed in Renaissance and Baroque Italy to represent the Virgin Mary and her child. While the works in this exhibition were intended for religious use, at their core they provide insight into the universal and timeless concepts of unconditional love, grief, and hope. The works included in this resource are but a fragment of a centuries-old and continuing tradition of expressing these concepts visually.

This packet contains information about the 60+ objects included in the *Picturing Mary* exhibition; inquiry-based strategies for incorporating these objects and their themes into your classroom through discussion; a glossary of materials and techniques; and step-by-step instructions for a related bookmaking activity.

To infuse a world perspective into this resource, we have incorporated objects from NMWA's online exhibition [A Global Icon: Mary in Context](#). Essential questions are provided to help compare and contrast the works in *Picturing Mary* with those in the online exhibition. Related full-color image reproductions of selected works are included for your use in the classroom.

In celebration of the museum's distinctive mission to celebrate women's creative contributions, this packet also includes fact sheets of six exemplary women who, against many odds, became successful and admired artists in their time. Works by these artists are included in *Picturing Mary* or *A Global Icon*.

Intended as an interdisciplinary tool, we developed this packet with Global Competencies in mind. We are confident that this resource will encourage your students to thoughtfully investigate the world; recognize and weight perspectives; practice empathy; and communicate their ideas.

We hope you find this packet a valuable reference and teaching resource.

Best wishes,

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Director of Education and Digital Engagement

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Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea

Introduction

Picturing Mary addresses the story of women and art by focusing on the most frequently depicted woman in Western art until the eighteenth century. The Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus Christ, embodied the Christian ideal of womanhood. She was the archetype of a passionately devoted woman and strong yet tender mother. Artists also presented Mary as the expression of spiritual ideals and of theological ideas—faith, mercy, and the maternal nature of the church.

Artists both female and male explored the Marian model of womanhood, and *Picturing Mary* presents their works together. Divided into six thematic sections, the exhibition presents images of Mary as a daughter, cousin, wife, and faithful servant to God; a protagonist in her own rich life story; the mother of an infant; a bereaved older parent; a link between earth and heaven; and an active participant in the lives of those who turn to her.

Visual representations of the Virgin Mary express both theological views and the interests of artists and patrons who created and used her image. Through paintings, sculptures, textiles, and decorative objects from the Renaissance and Baroque periods, many on view in the United States for the first time, *Picturing Mary* demonstrates the profound impact of one woman upon art and culture.

Exhibition Labels and Thumbnail Images

Introduction



Orsola Maddalena Caccia (Moncalvo, 1596–1676)
St. Luke the Evangelist in the Studio (San Luca Evangelista nello Studio), ca. 1625
 Oil on canvas
 Parrocchia Sant'Antonio di Padova, Moncalvo, Asti

In the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches, Saint Luke—a follower of Jesus, evangelist, and gospel author—is popularly called the “painter of the Virgin” because he is believed to have painted as well as written about Mary and Jesus. Orsola Caccia, an Ursuline nun and an artist, depicted Saint Luke creating both a painting and sculpture of the Virgin and Child in this work made for a church in Caccia’s hometown.



Orsola Maddalena Caccia (Moncalvo, 1596–1676)
Madonna and Child with St. Anne (Madonna col Bambino e Sant'Anna), ca. 1630s
 Oil on canvas
 Parrocchia Sant'Antonio di Padova, Moncalvo, Asti

According to apocryphal texts (non-scriptural works that are familiar to the faithful), Mary’s parents were Saint Anne and Saint Joachim. Here, Caccia depicts the Christ child tended by his mother and grandmother, Saint Anne. In the Ursuline order of nuns to which Caccia belonged, older nuns mentored newer arrivals to the convent. This painting may reflect Caccia’s understanding of the role more experienced women played in guiding young women’s spiritual development.



Giuseppe Maria Mazza (Bologna, 1653–1741)
Madonna and Child with Young St. John the Baptist (Madonna col Bambino e San Giovannino), ca. 1675
 Polychromed terracotta
 Grimaldi Fava Collection

Artists often included Saint John the Baptist, a cousin and follower of Jesus, in images of the Madonna and Child. Saint John holds a cross, an allusion to Christ’s later crucifixion. In this relief sculpture, Jesus looks toward John and the cross while Mary turns away, as if pained by the knowledge of her son’s fate. This clay sculpture is skillfully painted to resemble bronze.

NMWA Educator’s Guide for *Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea*



Nardo di Cione (Florence, ca. 1320–ca. 1365/66)

The Virgin Annunciate, ca. 1350–60

Oil and gold leaf on wood panel

Private Collection

The New Testament's Gospel of Luke describes the Annunciation, the moment when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary proclaiming that she would bear the son of God. This frequent subject in Marian art often shows Mary interrupted while reading sacred texts, signifying both her piety and the popular belief that she was educated in the Temple in Jerusalem.



Unknown Artist (Southern Germany, early 16th century)

Chasuble cross embroidered with Pietà, Angels, and Saints, ca. first half of 16th century

Wool embroidered with silk and gold thread

Diocese of Prato (Deposit from Private Collectors); inv. RF985

This embroidered cross once adorned a chasuble, a large, sleeveless outer garment worn by priests as they say the Eucharist, or "Mass," the central rite of worship in the Catholic faith. In the middle of the cross, Mary is seen holding the dead Christ while a sword penetrates her heart, a symbol of her grief.



Master of Martainville Workshop (France, late 15th–early 16th century)

Recto: *Annunciation and Visitation*; Verso: Bird with its young, ca. 1490–1500

Parchment page

Diocese of Prato (Deposit from Private Collectors); inv. RFC072

This page from a Book of Hours (a book of prayers to be said at particular times of the day) features scenes from the life of Mary on one side. The Hours of the Virgin is the main text of many of these books, which often begin with an image of the Annunciation, the moment when the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would give birth to Jesus. The reverse of this page shows a pelican watching over her chicks. The bird is a symbol of Christ's sacrificial death, as the pelican was believed to feed its young by plucking flesh from its own breast.



Angelo Pellegrini (Rome, 1842–1867)
Immaculate Conception and Symbols of the Evangelists (Madonna Immacolata e Simboli degli Evangelisti), ca. 1860
 Chased and tooled silver
 Diocese of Prato (Deposit from Private Collectors); inv. RF766

The Immaculate Conception is a name for the belief that the Virgin Mary was without sin from the moment she was conceived in her mother's womb. This idea was made an official part of Catholic dogma in 1854, around the time Pellegrini created this sculpture. Artistic representations of the Immaculate Conception typically show Mary standing on a crescent moon and wearing a crown of twelve stars, inspired by the description of the Woman of the Apocalypse in the Bible's Book of Revelation.



Embriachi Workshop (Venice, 14th–15th century)
Triptych with Madonna and Child and Saints (Trittico con Madonna col Bambino e Santi), ca. late 14th century–early 15th century
 Bone and wood
 Diocese of Prato (Deposit from Private Collectors); RF1070

This portable altarpiece opens to reveal relief sculptures depicting Mary and the infant Jesus surrounded by saints. In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, ivory was a rare and costly material. Artists of the Embriachi workshop satisfied a market eager for ivory and ivory-like products by carving their sculptures from animal bone.



Unknown Artist, Rhenish School (Germany, 14th century)
Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), 14th century
 Boxwood
 Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence; inv. C 1351

Boxwood, a plant native to the Mediterranean region, has a very fine grain and can be carved in precise detail. Historical artists often used it as a substitute for more expensive ivory. This depiction of the Virgin Mary as a regal figure—with a crown, delicate facial features, and a lushly draped gown—illustrates the Gothic era's courtly figural style.



Unknown Artist (Florence, Italy, mid–late 15th century)
Chasuble, ca. 1450–75
Chasuble: silk velvet, Panel with Annunciation: silk lampas
Diocese of Prato (Deposit from Private Collectors); inv. RF553

A chasuble is the outer garment worn by a Catholic priest while he says Mass. During the Renaissance, items made from silk counted among the most valuable possessions of both individuals and the church. The embroidered panel on this robe repeats a scene of the Annunciation. The simply stitched motif depicts Mary and Gabriel smiling broadly at Gabriel's joyous message that Mary would conceive Jesus.



Unknown Artist (Florence, Italy, mid-16th century)
Dalmatic with embroidered panels showing Mary's Assumption, ca. mid-16th century
Linen and silk brocade with silk lampas
Diocese of Prato (Deposit from Private Collectors); inv. RFC004

The dalmatic is the traditional outer garment worn by Catholic deacons as they participate in liturgical rites. This vestment is decorated with embroidered panels showing Mary's Assumption, the taking up of her body into heaven. The bottom-most panel illustrates the medieval legend of Mary handing her belt to the apostle Thomas as physical proof of her ascension.

Madonna and Child

Formal, non-narrative representations of Mary holding her child, Jesus, are commonly referred to as the Madonna and Child. The word Madonna originates from the medieval Italian term *madonna* or “my lady.” Compositions of this type often depict Mary dressed in refined attire and with a tranquil expression, allusions to her spiritual nobility and exalted role as the mother of God.

The humanist movement in Renaissance Europe, which celebrated God’s power and the dignity of human beings, increased interest in the developmental phases of infancy and early childhood. Artists in this period focused on Mary’s and Jesus’s humanity by depicting interaction between the mother and child, at the same time emphasizing their special status.



Desiderio da Settignano (Settignano, near Florence, ca. 1429/32–Florence, 1464)

Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), also called *Madonna Panciatichi*, ca. 1460

Marble, wood frame

Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence; inv. Dep. Pag. 42 N. 4

In this relief sculpture, once on the exterior of Florence’s Palazzo Panciatichi, Desiderio portrayed Mary with highly refined features, wearing simple but elegant garments, and interacting naturally with her fidgety baby. The presentation of Mary as both humble and genteel became the custom among Renaissance- and Baroque-era artists.



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (Venice, 1696–Madrid, 1770)

Madonna of the Goldfinch, ca. 1767–70

Oil on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Samuel H. Kress Collection; inv. 1943.4.40

Although she tenderly cradles Jesus, Mary’s solemn expression and downward gaze imply her foreknowledge of her son’s fate. The pet goldfinch in Jesus’s hand is a symbol of his crucifixion. A medieval legend proposed that the goldfinch, which feeds on thorny thistle plants, acquired the red spot on its plumage when one pulled a thorn from Jesus’s brow as he processed to his death.



Pontormo (Jacopo Carrucci) (Pontormo, near Empoli, 1494–Florence, ca. 1556/57)

Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), 1527

Oil on wood panel

Palazzo Capponi alle Rovinate, Florence

The simulated architectural frame surrounding Mary and Jesus concentrates attention on their physical interaction. Christ grasps Mary's bodice, possibly out of hunger, highlighting her role as nurturer. Working in the Mannerist style, Pontormo combined vivid colors and slight figural distortions to heighten the visual and emotional intensity of his imagery.



Fra Filippo Lippi (Florence, ca. 1406–Spoleto, 1469)

Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), ca. 1466–69

Tempera on wood panel

Provincia di Firenze, Palazzo Medici Riccardi, Florence

Lippi created this work for the wealthy Medici family of Florence. He painted Mary fashionably dressed in luxurious, bejeweled fabrics that reflect his patrons' social status and tastes. The Virgin's refined attire is countered by the impassioned cheek-to-cheek embrace she shares with Jesus, whose almost entirely nude figure emphasizes that through Mary, God's son truly became human.



Cosmè Tura, attrib. (Ferrara, ca. 1433–1495)

Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), ca. 1460–70

Terracotta

Grimaldi Fava Collection

The high-relief format of this sculpture accentuates Mary's head and hands as well as the sleeping Christ child; these forms are all sculpted nearly in the round. Tura developed an idiosyncratic style in which he exaggerated figural proportions for expressive purposes. Mary's large forehead and elongated hands, arranged in prayer, communicate her spiritual intensity.

This sculpture and a related painting in the collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., are exhibited together for the first time in *Picturing Mary*. The sculpture may be a preparatory study for the painting, or it may have been created later, conceptualizing the subject in a new medium.



Cosmè Tura (Ferrara, ca. 1433–1495)
Madonna and Child in a Garden, ca. 1460–70
 Tempera and oil on wood panel
 National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Samuel H. Kress Collection; inv. 1952.5.29

The similar positions of Mary's and Jesus's bodies in this painting reflect their close physical and emotional relationship. Jesus's sleeping pose prefigures his death, which is further emphasized by the sarcophagus upon which Mary sits. In the background, two orange trees symbolize Mary's purity. Tura also added an Annunciation scene—the angel Gabriel and Mary appear in raised scrolls at the top of the painting.



Benedetto da Maiano (Florence, 1442–1497) and Bernardo di Stefano Rosselli (Florence, ca. 1450–1526)
Madonna and Child Giving Blessing (Madonna col Bambino Benedicente), ca. 1490–1500
 Polychromed terracotta
 Grimaldi Fava Collection

This relief panel (in its original frame) was made for private use, and its Marian symbols reference popular devotional practices. The Latin text inscribed on the Virgin's opened book, *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*, or "My soul magnifies the Lord," are the first words of the Magnificat, the Marian canticle quoted in the Bible and often recited during evening prayers. The Virgin's sleeve is decorated with a star, illuminating one of her honorific titles, *Stella Maris*, or "Star of the Sea." Christ's right hand, now missing, was originally outstretched in a gesture of blessing.



Luca della Robbia (Florence?, ca. 1400–Florence, 1482)
Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), also called *Madonna of the Rose Garden (Madonna del Roseto)*, ca. 1450–60
 Glazed terracotta
 Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence; inv. R031

Artists often depicted Mary and Jesus among flowers and in gardens to emphasize that Christ derived his earthly nature from his human mother as a flower grows from the soil. Here Jesus reaches out to pluck a white rose, a popular symbol of the Virgin Mary's purity. Della Robbia is best known for his innovations with tin-glazed terracotta, a technique in which fired clay is coated with colored glazes that create a durable surface and enhance modeled details.



Michelangelo Buonarroti (Caprese?, 1475–Rome, 1564)

Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), ca. 1525

Black chalk, red chalk, red wash, white heightening, and ink on paper

Casa Buonarroti, Florence; inv. 71F

Michelangelo made this sketch as he developed a statuary group of the Madonna and Child for the Medici family funerary chapel in the church of San Lorenzo in Florence. Christ is portrayed nursing at Mary's breast, emphasizing the physical bond between the Virgin and her child. A visible under-drawing reveals that Michelangelo initially drew Mary with her face turned toward Jesus. In rendering Mary turned away from Christ and gazing at a distant point, Michelangelo suggested that even when her son was an infant, Mary pondered the mystery of his future death.

Michelangelo Buonarroti (Caprese?, 1475–Rome, 1564)

Study for the Head of the Madonna for the "Doni Tondo" (Studio di Testa per la Madonna del "Tondo Doni"), ca. 1506

Red chalk on paper

Casa Buonarroti, Florence; inv. 1F

This drawing is a study for Michelangelo's round (tondo) painting of the Holy Family (1504–06, Galleria degli Uffizi) commissioned by Florentine merchant Agnolo Doni, in which Mary is the most prominent figure. In the painting, Mary's body twists in a serpentine form, with her head turned sharply upward to her right. Michelangelo developed this unusual angle in this sketch, perhaps drawing on Greco-Roman sculptural prototypes. As a humanist artist, he applied compositional innovations to all figures, whether sacred or not.

Woman and Mother

Prior to the Renaissance, most artists depicted Mary as a queenly figure. The concept of Mary as an approachable woman developed in the late Middle Ages among religious orders such as the Franciscans, who view the earthly world and humankind as the most compelling manifestations of God's love. Human-centered spirituality was complemented by contemporary theology that emphasized Christ's authentic humanity, a result of his being born of the woman Mary.

A humanist concept of the Virgin Mary developed through the Renaissance, and artists portrayed her with more natural mannerisms. She is seen nursing and playing with the baby Jesus, interacting with her extended family, and directly experiencing the natural world.



Puccio Capanna (Florence/Assisi, act. ca. 1325–1350)

Madonna and Child with Annunciation and Female Saints (Regina Virginum), ca. 1330

Tempera and gold on wood panel

Vatican Museums, Vatican City; inv. 40170

Capanna is noted for his naturalistic figures that broke from stylized traditions. Here he painted the Madonna and Child surrounded by female saints, including early virgin martyrs Agnes (upper left) and Agatha (lower right). The Latin phrase *Regina Virginum* means "Queen of the Virgins," a title given to Mary to emphasize her role as a model of virtue and chastity.



Andrea Pisano (Pontedera, ca. 1295–Orvieto, ca. 1348/49)

Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), 1340

Carved marble with majolica

Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence; inv. 2005/407

Originally installed on the exterior of the bell tower beside the cathedral in Florence, this sculpture portrays a playful interaction between Mary and the Christ child. As Mary tickles Jesus, he smiles in laughter and attempts to push her hand away. The image illuminates the heightened realism in Tuscan art of the period, when modern family values emphasizing the importance of children first developed.



Orsola Maddalena Caccia (Moncalvo, 1596–1676)
The Birth of St. John the Baptist (Nascita di San Giovanni Battista), ca. 1635
 Oil on canvas
 Parrocchia Sant'Antonio di Padova, Moncalvo, Asti

The Gospel of Luke states that Mary, newly pregnant, visited her older cousin Saint Elizabeth, who was pregnant with Saint John the Baptist. Developing this theme, Caccia went beyond scripture and envisioned Mary present at the birth of her cousin's child. The Virgin is seated in the center, holding the newborn Saint John, and they are surrounded by Saint Elizabeth (resting in bed) and an array of female helpers and friends, including the richly dressed woman at center-right, probably the patron who commissioned this painting from Caccia.



Master of the Winking Eyes (act. Ferrara, ca. 1450–1470)
Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), ca. 1450
 Tempera and gold on wood panel
 Grimaldi Fava Collection

Based upon real-life observation of mothers playing with their young children, this painting portrays Mary and Jesus smiling joyfully. The artist's humanist approach is further emphasized by Mary's veil. Draped over Jesus's head as well as Mary's, the veil symbolizes the human nature Christ received from his mother, which concealed his divinity until the appointed time. Jesus wears a necklace and bracelets made from coral, a material believed since antiquity to have protective properties.



Federico Barocci (Urbino, ca. 1535–1612)
Rest on the Flight into Egypt (Il Riposo durante la Fuga in Egitto), also called *Madonna of the Cherries (La Madonna delle Ciliegie)*, 1570–73
 Oil on canvas
 Vatican Museums, Vatican City; inv. 40377

According to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus, Mary, and Saint Joseph traveled from Bethlehem to Egypt to escape King Herod's wrath. Barocci presents Mary as a beautifully dressed young mother. Having removed her straw hat, she fills a cup with water. The Virgin's exposed bare foot is both a naturalistic element and a reference to a passage in the Bible's Book of Genesis that foretells an event in which "the seed" of a woman will crush the head of the serpent (Satan) under his heel.



Elisabetta Sirani (Bologna, 1638–1665)

Virgin and Child, 1663

Oil on canvas

National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C., Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Conservation funds generously provided by the Southern California State Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts; inv. 1986.289

Sirani styled the Virgin's headdress after head coverings popular in the artist's hometown of Bologna. She portrays the baby Jesus crowning his mother with a garland of roses, which Mary lowers her head to receive. The rose is a common symbol of the Virgin, and the floral coronet alludes to Mary's later role as Queen of Heaven.



Artemisia Gentileschi (Rome, 1593–Naples?, 1656)

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

Oil on canvas

Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence; inv. 1890 no. 2129

In her portrayal of the Virgin preparing to nurse Jesus, Gentileschi depicts Mary without finery of any kind, emphasizing her humanity. The Virgin is barefoot and wears simple garments with just a sliver of halo visible above her head. Gentileschi gives Mary a solemn expression and further emphasizes her physicality by filling most of the pictorial space with her figure.

Mother of the Crucified

According to the Bible, Mary's experience of motherhood was influenced by her foreknowledge of Jesus's crucifixion and death. In the Gospel of Luke, Simeon prophesied to Mary that Jesus would be the source of salvation but also conflict, and that a sword would "pierce through" Mary's soul.

In many images of Mary with the young Jesus, artists allude to her apprehension about Christ's future. In scenes of the crucifixion, in which Mary directly observes her son's suffering and death, her grief is often a central subject. The Virgin's presence stresses her psychological participation in her son's experiences, from birth to death.



Sandro Botticelli (Alessandro Filipepi) (Florence, ca. 1444/45–1510)
Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), also called *Madonna of the Book (Madonna del Libro)*, 1480–81
 Tempera and oil on wood panel
 Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan; inv. 443

In this image of Mary reading from a prayer book, Jesus is positioned between her figure and the text, signifying the Christian belief that Christ is God's word made flesh (Gospel of John 1:14). Mary appears pensive, her expression suggesting her knowledge of Christ's destiny. The nails and crown of thorns held by Jesus (likely added later by another artist) reinforce the idea that the Virgin knew of her son's future Passion, foreseeing the experiences leading to his death.



Francescuccio Ghissi (The Marches?, act. 1359–1395)
The Dead Christ and Angels; Adoration of the Infant Jesus (Cristo Morto e Angeli; Adorazione di Gesù Bambino), ca. 1360



Tempera and gold on wood panel
 Vatican Museums, Vatican City; inv. 40244



In the bottom section of this painting, Mary, Saint Joseph, and angels observe the infant Jesus. The Virgin crosses her arms in reverence and gratitude. In the work's upper section, the arms of the adult Christ mirror the position of his mother's. Ghissi separated the two scenes with only a thin band of punchwork, suggesting that the image of the dead Christ is Mary's mental projection, as she comprehended his death from an early date.



Orsola Maddalena Caccia (Moncalvo, 1596–1676)
Nativity (Natività), ca. 1621–25
 Oil on canvas
 Musei di Strada Nuova, Palazzo Bianco, Genoa; inv. PB 493

In this scene imagining the moments after Christ's birth, Mary and Jesus are surrounded by Saint Joseph, small angels, and Saint John the Baptist, who holds a finger to his lips, indicating that Jesus is asleep and should not be disturbed. The disheveled folds of Mary's white gown suggest that she has just finished nursing her son, highlighting her role as human nurturer of the son of God. Though sleeping, Christ's slack body in his mother's arms calls to mind the Pietà, the portrayal of Mary holding Jesus's body after the crucifixion.



Orsola Maddalena Caccia (Moncalvo, 1596–1676)
Madonna with the Sleeping Christ Child (Madonna col Bambino Dormiente), ca. 1620–25
 Oil on canvas
 Arcidiocesi di Vercelli, Parrocchia Sant'Eusebio, Bianzè; inv. 0110 DI 01-11667

In this image, Mary pauses from her mending to look over at her sleeping infant son. Artists often treated the subject of the Christ child sleeping as a metaphor for his death, but Caccia also positions Jesus's figure as a link between the earthly and heavenly realms. Engaged in a quiet domestic activity at the left, Mary personifies the earthly world, while the small angels or "putti" at the right represent an otherworldly realm. Between them rests Jesus, who is both human and divine.



Maison Samson (France, late 19th century)
Deposition from the Cross and Mourners (Deposizione della Croce, i Dolenti), late 19th century
 Grisaille enamel on copper framed in gilded wood
 Diocese of Prato (Deposit from Private Collectors); inv. RF853

This triptych exemplifies the renewed interest during the nineteenth century in medieval and Renaissance luxury crafts such as painted enamelwork. The grisaille enamel technique, which uses only shades of gray pigment, emphasizes the somber mood of the work's central subject: the removal of Christ's body from the cross following his crucifixion. Mary is pictured twice in the triptych: in the central panel at the foot of the cross, incapacitated by grief, and in the left-hand panel.



Jean I Pénicaud (Limoges, ca. 1490–ca. 1541)

Crucifixion (Crocifissione), ca. 1530

Enamel and gold on copper

Diocese of Prato (Deposit from Private Collectors); inv. RF763

In this crucifixion scene, based on a German woodcut made for a prayer book, Mary is distinguished by her voluminous and brilliant blue cloak. She stands to Christ's right, looking away from her son in anguish. Pénicaud belonged to the earliest eminent family of enamellers in Limoges. He achieved vibrant colors by painting translucent pigments onto a copper plate heightened with silver leaf.



Guillaume de Marcillat (La Châtre, near Bourges, ca. 1467/70–Arezzo, 1529)

Deposition and Entombment (Deposizione e Sepoltura di Cristo), 1526

Stained glass

Palazzo Capponi alle Rovinate, Florence

Ludovico Capponi commissioned this window for his family chapel in the church of Santa Felicita in Florence. Marcillat created a continuous narrative—Christ's deposition from the cross appears at the top of the window, and his subsequent entombment, observed by Mary at the lower left, is visible at the bottom. This window was originally positioned on a wall between frescoed figures of Mary and the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation, thereby illuminating the role Mary played in Jesus's life from birth to death.



Luca della Robbia (Florence?, ca. 1400–Florence, 1482)

Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), ca. 1430

Polychromed terracotta

Chiesa di Santa Felicita, Florence

Madonna and Child compositions typically feature a serene young Mary. Here, however, Luca della Robbia portrayed the Virgin with a troubled expression to indicate her foreknowledge of Jesus's suffering and death. As she gazes away from her son, Mary's lips are slightly parted in reverie. The Christ child tries to wriggle away from her, and she appears to consider how to hold and keep him safe.



Giorgio Vasari
(Arezzo, 1511–Florence, 1574)
Crucifixion, ca. 1560s
Oil on panel
Private Collection

Vasari hewed to artistic traditions for depicting the Virgin Mary's grief as she observes her son's death. While Saint John the Evangelist holds his clasped hands at his waist, Mary raises hers heavenward in a prayerful, pleading gesture. The Virgin's intense but contained reaction contrasts with Vasari's more dramatic conception of Jesus's follower Mary Magdalene. She kneels before the cross and embraces it, gazing upon the nail that pierces Christ's feet.



Master of Sant'Anastasia (Verona, 14th century)
Crucifixion (Crocifissione), 14th century
Stone
Olivetti Rason Collection, Florence

The Master of Sant'Anastasia's sculpted figures are distinguished by large heads and hands that accentuate their expressions and gestures. Standing beside Jesus, Saint John the Evangelist grimaces in anguish, while Mary imploringly raises her clasped hands. Christ turns his head toward Mary, his mouth agape in suffering, as if crying out to his mother.

A Singular Life

In the Bible, there are no references to the Virgin Mary's parents, her upbringing, or her death, yet many artists imagined and portrayed these subjects. For inspiration, they consulted primarily apocryphal writings about Mary that were not accepted within the Christian canon but were popular nonetheless. The need of the faithful for a fuller narrative of Mary's life speaks to the human desire to relate to her as an individual.

Beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, partly in response to objections raised by Protestant reformers, the Catholic Church discouraged Marian subjects that were not strictly biblical. Artists in this later period focused on scriptural references to Mary and non-narrative themes such as Mary's eternal preservation from sin.



Sassoferrato (Giovanni Battista Salvi) (Sassoferrato, 1609–Rome, 1685)

Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), ca. 1650

Oil on canvas

Vatican Museums, Vatican City; inv. 40396

Artists depicted the Immaculate Conception (the idea that Mary is eternally sinless) for centuries before the Catholic Church declared it to be dogma in 1854. The visual expression of the Immaculate Conception frequently follows the description of the Woman of the Apocalypse in the New Testament's Book of Revelation: a woman with the moon beneath her feet and crowned with twelve stars, who bore a child. This dream-like vision theologizes the account of Christ's birth as well as Mary's role in salvation through Jesus.



Antonio del Pollaiuolo (Florence, ca. 1432–Rome, 1498)

Visitation (La Visitazione), ca. 1466–80

Embroidered brocade in silk and gold thread

Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence; inv. 2005/325

Mary's conception of Jesus is mirrored in the concurrent gospel story of Zacharias and Elizabeth, Mary's cousin, who conceived their child, Saint John the Baptist, in their old age. When the two expectant cousins met, Elizabeth greeted Mary, saying, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." To signify Mary's humility, Pollaiuolo's design shows the Virgin gripping Elizabeth's hand, trying to prevent her cousin from bowing in homage. This embroidered panel previously adorned a liturgical vestment made for use in the Florence Baptistery and worn at special Masses commemorating Saint John, the patron saint of Florence.



Vittore Carpaccio (Venice?, ca. 1460/65–Venice, ca. 1525/26)
Marriage of the Virgin (Sposalizio della Vergine), also called *Miracle of the Flowering Staff (Miracolo della Verga Fiorita)*, 1502–05
 Oil on canvas
 Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

Mary is depicted here before the high priest in the Temple in Jerusalem. According to several apocryphal texts, Joseph, seen to the right of Mary, was chosen to be her husband when his staff miraculously blossomed with flowers. Other disgruntled suitors are seen breaking their barren ones. This is one of six paintings depicting scenes from the life of the Virgin that Carpaccio made to decorate the meeting rooms of a confraternity in Venice.



Master of the Orleans Triptych (?) (Limoges, ca. 1500)
Nativity (Natività) with Annunciation (Annunciazione), ca. 1500
 Enamel on copper
 Diocese of Prato (Deposit from Private Collectors); inv. RFO445a, RFO445b, RFO445c

This triptych was likely used by a wealthy individual for private devotional practices. The side panels depict the Annunciation, the moment when the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would bear God's son. The center image portrays the Nativity (the moments after Jesus's birth) with a host of angels who proclaimed the Christ child's birth to nearby shepherds.



Limoges Workshop (Limoges, ca. late 15th–early 16th century)
Annunciation (Annunciazione), ca. 1500
Nativity (Natività), ca. 1500–10
Adoration of the Magi (Adorazione dei Magi), ca. 1490–1500

All: Enamel on copper

Diocese of Prato (Deposit from Private Collectors); inv. RFO762, RFO761, RFO827

Although narratives drawn from apocryphal accounts of Mary's life were many, more numerous by far were the subjects that artists took from accepted biblical texts. Canonical stories such the Annunciation and visits by shepherds and the three kings to Bethlehem to see the infant Christ are among the most popular Marian subjects. Small and portable, these enamels were likely used for private prayer and contemplation.



Albrecht Dürer (Nuremberg, 1471–1528)

Left to right: *The Birth of the Virgin*, ca. 1503–04

The Annunciation, ca. 1502–04

The Circumcision, ca. 1504–05

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple, ca. 1504–05

Christ Taking Leave from His Mother, ca. 1504–05

The Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin, 1510

Woodcuts

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Rosenwald Collection, 1943.3.3580; 1943.3.3577; 1943.3.3585; 1943.3.3587; 1943.3.3591; 1943.3.3630

Mary served as a role model for all women, but especially for nuns, women who took vows of chastity and who typically lived together in seclusion from the outside world. These six prints are from a series of twenty images depicting episodes from Mary's life. In 1511, Dürer published a new edition of these prints for Caritas Pirckheimer, abbess of the Franciscan convent of St. Clara in Nuremberg, Germany. On the reverse of his engravings, Dürer printed poems about the Virgin Mary by the Benedictine monk Benedictus Chelidonius.



Titian and Workshop (Tiziano Vecellio, Pieve di Cadore, ca. 1480/85–Venice, 1576)

Madonna and Child with St. John the Baptist and Two Saints (Madonna col Bambino, San Giovannino e Due Santi), ca. 1535

Oil on canvas

Kasser Mochary Foundation

A *sacra conversazione* (sacred conversation) is a representation of Mary and Jesus with figures who, despite their existence at different times, all occupy the same physical space. In the lower left, Saint John the Baptist holds aloft a banner that reads *Ecce Agnus Dei*, or “Behold the lamb of God.” Titian was the teacher of Simone Peterzano, whose *Holy Family* is also on view here.



Simone Peterzano (Bergamo?, ca. 1540–Milan, ca. 1596)
Holy Family with Infant St. John the Baptist and an Angel (Sacra Famiglia con San Giovannino e un Angelo), early 1570s
Oil on canvas
Olivetti Rason Collection, Florence

Caravaggio's first teacher, Simone Peterzano, followed sixteenth-century artistic traditions by positioning Mary at the center of his composition. Her placement is emblematic of her roles as both the supporter of Christ and intercessor between her son and those who worship him. Saint Joseph, a young Saint John the Baptist, and an angel press in around Mary and Jesus. The golden palette of this image adds to its ethereal quality.



Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio) (Near Milan, 1571–Porto Ercole, Tuscany, 1610)
Rest on the Flight into Egypt (Il Riposo durante la Fuga in Egitto), 1594–96
Oil on canvas
Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome

In this scene derived from the Gospel of Matthew, Caravaggio placed the figure of an angel in the center, dividing the composition and providing Mary and Jesus with a discrete space. Caravaggio emphasized Mary's beauty and nearness to God by placing her and the infant Christ in the verdant landscape to the right, which stands in contrast to the rocky terrain that Saint Joseph occupies to the left. Mary's importance is reinforced by the musical score from which the angel plays—a Marian motet that begins, "How beautiful you are and how fair."

Mary as Idea

In biblical and apocryphal narratives, Mary's words and actions express her humility, foresight, and understanding. Artists also used her image to allude to broader concepts defining the Christian faith. Mary came to represent the church in its role as nurturer of the faithful. She also served as the emblem of perfect faith, was cast as the new Eve, and was seen as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. In presenting the Virgin as the personification of abstract ideas, artists built upon a tradition begun in antiquity, when female figures exemplified virtues, vices, seasons, cardinal directions, and other concepts.



Nicolò Barabino (Sampierdarena or Genoa?, 1832–Florence, 1891)
Faith with Representations of the Arts (La Fede con i Rappresentanti delle Arti), 1884–85

Oil on canvas

Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence; inv. N. 90.87.1028

This painting is the template for a mosaic that is presently installed above the southwest portal of the Florence Cathedral, dedicated to Mary. In Barabino's painting and subsequent mosaic, Mary, enthroned and garbed in her characteristic blue robe, is shown as the personification of Faith. She holds a Bible, an allusion to Jesus, who is considered to be the word of God made flesh. Merchants and workmen, representatives of the prosperity that enabled the cathedral's construction, surround her and pay homage by presenting her with various goods.



Unknown Artist (Flanders, late 16th century)

Annunciation with Six Prophets (Annunciazione e Sei Profeti) (after a 1571 print by Cornelis Cort [1533–before 1578] of a fresco by Federico Zuccari [ca. 1541–1609] in Santa Maria Annunziata al Collegio Romani, destroyed in mid-17th century), 1590

Oil on wood panel

Diocese of Prato (Deposit from Private Collectors); inv. RFC033



Raphaël Sadeler (Antwerp, ca. 1560/61–Munich, ca. 1628/32)

Annunciation with Six Prophets (Annunciazione e Sei Profeti) (after a 1571 print by Cornelis Cort [1533–before 1578] of a fresco by Federico Zuccari [ca. 1541–1609] in Santa Maria Annunziata al Collegio Romani, destroyed in mid-17th century), 1580

Engraving on paper

Diocese of Prato (Deposit from Private Collectors); inv. RFC034

In the now-lost fresco that inspired these two works, Federico Zuccari visualized the idea that the virgin birth of Jesus was foretold by six Old Testament prophets—seen here on either side of Mary and the angel Gabriel holding their predictions. Adam and Eve, represented in the upper corners, signal that in Christ through Mary, humankind can achieve redemption for the sins of its forebears. During the Counter-Reformation period, in response to Protestantism’s minimization of Mary’s role in the salvation of humanity, Catholic artists emphasized her essential and powerful position as the mother of God.



Tino di Camaino (Siena, ca. 1280–Naples, 1337)
Madonna and Child/Seat of Wisdom (Madonna Sedes Sapientiae), ca. 1318–19
 Marble
 Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence; inv. S434

The concept of Mary as a seat or throne for Christ is emphasized here by her monumental form, which echoes the shape of the block of marble. The words inscribed along the bottom, *Sedes Sapientiae*, translate to “Seat of Wisdom” and allude both to Mary’s support of Jesus and to his divine wisdom in human form. Crowned and seated upon her own throne, Tino’s regal Mary also has a book on her knee, referring to the idea that Christ is God’s Word made flesh.



Agostino di Duccio (Florence, 1418–Perugia?, after 1481)
Madonna and Child Surrounded by Four Angels, also called *Madonna d’Auvillers*, ca. 1464–69
 Marble
 Musée du Louvre, Département des Sculptures, Paris; inv. RF 1352

Surrounded by angels who peer around the mandorla (an almond-shaped emanation of light) behind her and the Christ child, Mary here wears a particularly serene expression. At the top of her forehead, Agostino added the unusual element of a medallion featuring a cherub’s face. Mary was the first human privileged with the knowledge of the Savior’s identity, and the divine source of her knowledge is symbolized by the angelic face that adorns her headdress.



Andrea Mantegna (Padua?, ca. 1431–Mantua, 1506)
Madonna of the Quarry (Madonna delle Cave), ca. 1466 or 1488–90
 Tempera on wood panel
 Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence; inv. 1890 N. 1348

The quarry behind Mary and Jesus in this image is symbolic of both their earthly experiences and their roles within the Christian faith. The small figures

on the right, who are carving columns from excavated rock, allude to Christ's flagellation at the column during his Passion. More figuratively, Jesus is called the "living stone" of the church in the New Testament's First Epistle of Peter. Mantegna's distinctive rocky landscape may also represent the genealogical "quarry" of Abraham, from which Mary and Jesus were descended.



Lorenzo di Credi (Florence, ca. 1456–1536)

The Annunciation and Three Stories from Genesis (Annunciazione e Tre Storie della Genesi), ca. 1480–85

Tempera on wood panel

Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence; inv. 1890 n. 1597

As early as the second century CE, Christian theology positioned Mary as a new Eve. In her acceptance of God's will, Mary countered Eve's disobedience, which was thought to be the source of humankind's fall from grace. Lorenzo made this parallel clear by painting simulated stone relief scenes of Eve below the main scene of the angel Gabriel delivering God's message to Mary. From left to right are the creation of Eve, Eve offering Adam fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, and Eve and Adam's expulsion from the Garden of Eden.



Gerard David (Oudewater, near Gouda, ca. 1460–Bruges, 1523)

The Annunciation, ca. 1490

Oil on oak panel

Detroit Institute of Arts, City of Detroit Purchase; inv. 27.201

Christian theologians interpreted numerous events in the Old Testament as harbingers of Jesus's conception and birth. They likened the story in which Moses encountered a bush that burned but was not consumed by flame to Mary, who conceived a child yet remained a virgin. In this image of the Annunciation, David referenced this Old Testament event by placing an image of the scene on the wall just above the angel's head.

Mary in the Life of Believers

Perceiving Mary as their intercessor and confidante, believers filled their churches and homes with images depicting her. They invoked her name in prayers and songs, and during Mass saw her likeness in altarpieces, stained glass windows, and even vestments worn by clergy. At home, they contemplated images of the Virgin in statues, paintings, and more modestly priced prints. In her picture-within-a-picture, artist Sofonisba Anguissola depicted herself painting the Virgin. Anguissola's composition demonstrates both her embrace of Mary's dignity and compassion and her wish to engage with one of the most revered subjects in Western art.



Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn (Leiden, 1606–Amsterdam, 1669)

The Death of the Virgin, 1639

Etching

Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire, Museum Purchase:
The Henry Melville Fuller Acquisition Fund; inv. 2010.26.19

In his image of Mary on her deathbed, Rembrandt used fine, loose strokes to create the appearance of an intense light emanating from the host of angels and washing over Mary's body. Theologians in Rembrandt's time debated whether the Virgin was deceased or alive at the time of her assumption into heaven; here, a priest holds Mary's wrist to detect a pulse. Rembrandt focused on the emotional impact of the moment, surrounding Mary's figure with women and men (some presumably apostles) whose anxious expressions and gestures convey their concern for her.



Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri) (Cento, near Ferrara, 1591–Bologna, 1666)

Madonna of the Nativity (Madonna del Presepe)

(after Donatello and Bartolomeo Bellano), ca. 1624–25

Ink on paper

Grimaldi Fava Collection

Made in preparation for a print, Guercino's drawing copies a relief sculpture by Bartolomeo Bellano (ca. 1437–ca. 1497) that was venerated in the town of Cento, where Guercino was born. Bellano's truncated composition portrays the heads of Saint Joseph, an ox, and a donkey arranged around the figures of Mary and the infant Jesus. Guercino included an ornate frame that the townspeople in Cento placed around Bellano's sculpture in the sixteenth century. He also added loosely drawn angels, whose arms drape over the frame.



Elisabetta Sirani (Bologna, 1638–1665)

The Holy Family with St. Elizabeth and St. John the Baptist, ca. 1650–60

Etching on paper

National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C., Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; inv. 1986.290

In this composition, Mary and the infant Jesus appear beside Mary's older cousin Saint Elizabeth and Elizabeth's son Saint John the Baptist, while Saint Joseph works at his carpenter's bench behind them. A sewing basket rests in the lower left corner, as Elizabeth rolls fabric, and Mary dandles a ball of thread before John while she nurses Jesus. This imagined domestic scene appealed to the faithful, who could see in Mary the reflection of their own lives.



Unknown Artist (The Marche?, ca. late 15th century)

Mother of Mercy (Madonna della Misericordia), 1494

Oil on wood panel

Municipality of Gradara, Gradara Castle, Marche Region, Italy

Representations of Mary sheltering the faithful beneath her cloak are called *Mater misericordiae* (Mother of Mercy) images. Rendered much larger than the other figures in this painting, Mary appears as a powerful intercessor and conciliator. By layering an image of the infant Christ over the Virgin's womb, the artist also adapted an image type known as Our Lady of the Sign or *Platyτέρα*, a Greek word meaning "wider than the heavens." This presentation of the Virgin is most prevalent in Eastern Orthodox imagery.



Bernardino Monaldi (Florence, act. 1588–ca. 1614)

Madonna of the Rosary and Saints (Madonna del Rosario e Santi), 1611

Oil on canvas

Museo di Arte Sacra, Certaldo

Popular Christian tradition holds that Saint Dominic learned the recitation prayer called the rosary through a vision of the Virgin Mary; he is seen at the center-left, receiving prayer beads from the Virgin. Madonna of the Rosary compositions are often dense, with sacred figures and miniature scenes of the prayer's fifteen "mysteries" (episodes from Jesus's life that believers contemplate while they pray) arranged around the Virgin and Christ child. Near Saint Dominic in the foreground are (from left to right) Saint Michael, Saint Stephen (with a rock on his head), possibly Saint Catherine of Siena, and Saint Catherine of Alexandria.



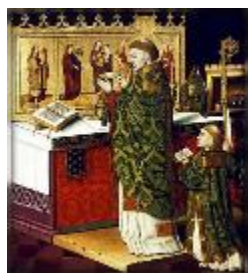
Sofonisba Anguissola (Cremona, ca. 1532–Palermo, 1625)

Self-Portrait at the Easel, 1556

Oil on canvas

Muzeum-Zamek, Łańcut; inv. 916MT

Anguissola, one of the first women artists to earn international renown, was best known as a painter of portraits. In this work, created when the artist was twenty-four, Anguissola depicts herself painting the Madonna and Child. She presents herself as capable of engaging with sacred subject matter, tacitly drawing a comparison between herself and Saint Luke, the evangelist who, according to legend, painted the Virgin.



Unknown Artist, Franconian School (Germany, mid-15th century)

Miraculous Mass of St. Martin of Tours, ca. 1440

Tempera and gold on canvas on wood panel

Allentown Art Museum, Samuel H. Kress Collection, 1961; inv. 1961.45

As the altarpiece visible in this painting indicates, an image of the Madonna and Child was frequently a focal point of worship services during the Renaissance era. The altarpiece shown depicts Mary flanked by four female saints (from left to right: Barbara, Dorothea, Mary Magdalene, and Ursula), a subject called *Virgo inter Virgines* (Virgin among Virgins), which originated in Germany in the early fourteenth century. Works of this type were often made for use in convents.

This painting portrays a story in Jacobus de Voragine's *The Golden Legend*, a medieval text recounting Christian saints' lives. Saint Martin, who was a bishop, gave his vestments to a needy person. As he celebrated the Mass, a ball of flame representing his intense charity descended upon his head, and angels covered his body with an ornate cloth.



Orsola Maddalena Caccia (Moncalvo, 1596–1676)

Mystical Marriage of the Blessed Osanna Andreasi (Matrimonio Mistico della Beata Osanna Andreasi), 1648

Oil on canvas

Museo Diocesano Francesco Gonzaga, Mantua

Numerous sixteenth-century artists painted Osanna Andreasi (1449–1505), a mystic and Dominican tertiary (she wore the order's habit but did not live in a religious community). Caccia's unique conception of Andreasi visualizes the Virgin Mary taking part in Andreasi's symbolic betrothal to Christ. Mary assists the angel in holding the cross that Andreasi bears on her shoulder. Caccia also incorporated flowers that

symbolize the Virgin, including white lilies and roses. Because she was sinless, Mary is often described as a “rose without thorns.”

Materials and Techniques Glossary

Chasing

Description: A decorative technique whereby variously shaped tools are used to compress the metal surface to create patterns without removing any metal. Chasing is also used to finish parts cast in a mold and to refine [repoussé](#) ornamentation.

Embroidered brocade

Description: Brocade is a class of richly decorative [woven fabrics](#), often made in colored [silks](#) with or [gold](#) and/or [silver](#) threads. Brocade is typically woven on a draw [loom](#). It is a supplementary [weft](#) technique; that is, the ornamental brocading is produced by a supplementary, non-structural, weft in addition to the standard weft that holds the [warp](#) threads together. The purpose of this is to give the appearance that the weave actually was embroidered on. Embroidery is a decorative surface stitching on a fabric backing that is practiced in all parts of the world.

Enamel

Description: Vitreous enamel, also called porcelain enamel, is a material made by fusing powdered [glass](#) to a substrate by firing. The powder melts, flows, and then hardens to a smooth, durable coating on [metal](#), or on glass or [ceramics](#). The term "enamel" is most often restricted to work on metal. Enameled glass is also called "painted". Fired enamelware is an integrated layered composite of glass and metal.

Origin: The word *enamel* comes from the Old High German word *smelzan* (to [smelt](#)) via the Old French *esmail*. Enameling is an old and widely adopted technology, for most of its history mainly used in [jewelry](#) and [decorative art](#). Since the 19th century the term applies also to industrial materials and many metal consumer objects, such as some cooking vessels, dishwashers, laundry machines, sinks, and tubs.

Engraving

Description: Engraving is the practice of incising a design onto a hard, usually flat surface, by cutting grooves into it. The result may be a decorated object in itself, as when silver, gold, steel, or glass are engraved, or may provide an intaglio printing plate, of copper or another metal, for printing images on paper as prints or illustrations; these images are also called engravings.

Origin: Engraving was a historically important method of producing images on paper in artistic printmaking, in mapmaking, and also for commercial reproductions and illustrations for books and magazines. It has long been replaced by various photographic processes in its commercial applications and, partly because of the difficulty of learning the technique, is much less common in printmaking, where it has been largely replaced by etching and other techniques.

Use Today: Traditional engraving, with tools called burins or with the use of machines, continues to be practiced by goldsmiths, glass engravers, gunsmiths and others, while modern industrial techniques such as photoengraving and laser engraving have many important applications.

Etching

Description: A method of making prints from a metal plate, usually copper, into which the design has been incised by acid. The copperplate is first coated with an acid-resistant substance, called the etching ground, through which the design is drawn with a sharp tool. The ground is usually a compound of beeswax, bitumen, and resin. The plate is then exposed to nitric acid or Dutch mordant, which eats away those areas of the plate unprotected by the ground, forming a pattern of recessed lines. These lines hold the ink, and, when the plate is applied to moist paper, the design transfers to the paper, making a finished print.

Origin: The earliest German etchings were made at the beginning of the 16th century on iron plates. Since the third quarter of the 19th century zinc has often been used, being cheaper and more sympathetic to coarser effects. Brass, aluminum and even composite metals, such as tinned or chromed steel, have also been employed.

Gilding

Description: The term gilding covers a number of decorative techniques for applying fine gold leaf or powder to solid surfaces such as wood, stone, or metal to give a thin coating of gold. A gilded object is described as "gilt".

Origin: Fifth century BC historian Herodotus mentions that the Egyptians gilded wood and metals, and many such objects have been excavated. Certain Ancient Greek statues of great prestige were chryselephantine, meaning they were made of gold (for the clothing) and ivory (for the flesh); these however, were constructed with sheets of gold over a timber framework, not gilded. Extensive ornamental gilding was also used in the ceiling coffers of the Propylaea.

Glazed terracotta

Description: Glazed terracotta derives its color from dipping or painting a glaze layer onto a dried terracotta surface and then firing it in a kiln to vitrify the glaze and adhere it to the clay. This is different than other polychrome techniques in which the color is painted on and absorbed into the surface of the clay itself.

Origin: Glazed terracotta was prefabricated colored terracotta that became popular in the 19th century and originated in the United Kingdom.

Grisaille

Description: A decoration in tones of a single color and especially gray designed to produce a three-dimensional effect.

Majolica

Description: Term used to describe 19th-century decorative wares, covered in thick lead glazes and loosely based on Italian 16th-century *maiolica*. This modern version was first introduced at the Minton Ceramic Factory in England. Traditional *maiolica* is Italian earthenware covered with an opaque glaze made of tin oxide and typically highly decorated.

Online resource: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzwk0hsomjl>

Polychrome terracotta

Description: Polychrome terracotta is the practice of decorating terracotta sculptures or architectural elements by covering them with various colors of paint.

Origin: Examples of polychromal pottery can be found as far back as Ancient Greece.

Repoussé

Description: Also called embossing, this metalwork technique used to define or refine the forms of a surface design and to bring them to the height of relief required. The metal is worked from the front by hammering with various tools that raise, depress, or push aside the metal without removing any from the surface.

Origin: The techniques of repoussé date from Antiquity and have been used widely with gold and silver for fine detailed work and with copper, tin, and, bronze for larger sculptures. Classical pieces using this technique include the bronze Greek armor plates from the 3rd century BC.

Stained glass

Description: The term stained glass can refer to colored [glass](#) as a material or to works created from it. Although traditionally made in flat panels and used as windows, the creations of modern stained glass artists also include three-dimensional structures and [sculpture](#).

Origin: Throughout its thousand-year history, the term has been applied almost exclusively to the windows of churches and other significant buildings.

Use Today: Modern vernacular usage has often extended the term "stained glass" to include domestic [leadlight](#) and [objects d'art](#) created from [came glasswork](#) exemplified in the famous lamps of [Louis Comfort Tiffany](#).

Online resource: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wlnb5Rgsahl>

Tempera

Description: Tempera, also known as egg tempera, is a permanent, fast-drying painting medium consisting of colored pigment mixed with a water-soluble binder medium (usually a glutinous material such as egg yolk). Tempera also refers to the paintings done in this medium. Tempera

paintings are very long lasting, and examples from the first century AD still exist. Tempera painting was the primary panel painting medium for nearly every painter in the European Medieval and Early Renaissance period up to 1500. For example, every surviving panel painting by Michelangelo is egg tempera.

Origin: Tempera painting has been found on early Egyptian sarcophagi decorations. Many of the Fayum mummy portraits use tempera.

Use Today: Although tempera has been out of favor since the Late Renaissance and Baroque eras, it has been periodically rediscovered by later artists such as William Blake, the Nazarenes, the Pre-Raphaelites, and Joseph Southall. The 20th century saw a significant revival of tempera. European painters who worked with tempera include Giorgio de Chirico, Otto Dix, Eliot Hodgkin, Pyke Koch and Pietro Annigoni, who used an emulsion of egg yolks, stand oil, and varnish.

Terracotta

Description: A hard, fired brownish-red colored clay.

Tooled

Description: General term for work done with a tool or tools; tooled ornamentation, as on metal, wood, stone, or leather.

Online resource: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsLT_Co49Gs

Warp

Description: The set of yarn placed lengthwise in the loom, crossed by and interlaced with the weft, and forming the lengthwise threads in a woven fabric.

Weft

Description: The yarn woven across the width of the fabric through the lengthwise warp yarn.

Woodcut

Description: Woodcut is a relief-printing technique in which prints are made from a block that has been carved, or incised.

Origin: It is one of the oldest methods of making prints from a relief surface, having been used in China to decorate textiles since the 5th century AD. In Europe, printing from wood blocks on textiles was known from the early 14th century, but it had little development until paper began to be manufactured in France and Germany at the end of the 14th century. In Bavaria, Austria, and Bohemia, religious images and playing cards were first made from wood blocks in the early 15th century, and the development of printing from movable type led to widespread use of woodcut illustrations in the Netherlands and in Italy.

Online resource: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgCYovIFRNY>

Classroom Activities

QUEST Activity

Project MUSE QUESTs

The following inquiry-based entry points and related question sets are adapted from Harvard Project Zero's Project MUSE (Museums Uniting with Schools in Education). Project MUSE, an international collaboration of researchers, classroom teachers, museum educators, and school principals, explored the potential of art museums to serve as integral elements of education.

Connections between art museum and school learning are most often based on subject or theme. For example, students visit an exhibit of Greek art as part of a history class's study of the Greeks or an English class's project on heroes. Project MUSE turned the focus from subject or theme to the learner, and to connections that are based on the activity of learning itself. In this context, for example, students who visit the art museum develop and reflect upon skills of observation that can serve them as surely in their study of science as in their efforts in writing.

Project MUSE developed QUESTs (Questions for Understanding, Exploring, Seeing, and Thinking) which foster critical thinking and reflection on art and through various entry points. Regardless of the entry point, each QUEST's foundation is built upon the principles of:

- **Inquiry:** posing open-ended questions without right or wrong answers;
- **Access:** appealing to a wide range of learners (concept of Multiple Intelligences); and
- **Reflection:** providing opportunities for thinking about one's own thinking.

The following QUESTs focus on three entry points: aesthetic, narrative, and foundational.

(Adapted from Project MUSE, 1995, Harvard Project Zero, http://www.pz.gse.harvard.edu/project_muse.php)

AESTHETIC QUEST

Let's begin...

Here is a set of questions for exploring works of art. You can respond to them on your own or take turns with someone else or with a group of people.

Begin by choosing a work of art anywhere in the museum—it's your choice. Please try not to read anything about the work before you start your QUEST.

You will find that these questions invite different responses according to the work of art you select and depending on whether you answer them on your own or with others. You can use this MUSE QUEST again and again with many different works of art and in many different situations.

Please note...

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. You don't need an art background or any specific information to pursue this QUEST.

Preliminary question: Do you like this work of art? Why or why not? *(There are five questions in this QUEST. Please move on to question one.)*

1. What was the first element you noticed? What else caught your eye? *(When you run out of responses, move on to question two.)*
2. Do you see movement in this work of art or does it seem still? Do the colors, lines, and shapes make it seem that way? How? *(Whenever you are ready, please move on to question three.)*
3. Describe the space that you see created by this work of art. Does it remind you of a place in your own life? *(Move on to question four.)*
4. In making this work of art, what materials and/or tools do you think the artist used? What problems might the artist have faced along the way? *(When you are finished, move on to question five.)*
5. What makes this work of art look real to you? What makes it look unreal? *(Please remember there are no right or wrong answers in this QUEST.)*

Reflection question: Think back on all your responses. What have you discovered about making and looking at art? Have you learned anything about yourself or others? *(Do you like this work of art more or less than you did in the beginning? Do you think it matters if you like it?)*

NARRATIVE QUEST

Let's begin...

Here is a set of questions for exploring works of art. You can respond to them on your own or take turns with someone else or with a group of people.

Begin by choosing a work of art anywhere in the museum—it's your choice. Please try not to read anything about the work before you start your QUEST.

You will find that these questions invite different responses according to the work of art you select and depending on whether you answer them on your own or with others. You can use this MUSE QUEST again and again with many different works of art and in many different situations.

Please note...

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. You don't need an art background or any specific information to pursue this QUEST.

Preliminary question: Do you like this work of art? Why or why not? *(There are five questions in this QUEST. Please move on to question one.)*

1. What is the story that you see in this work of art? How do the colors help to tell this story? *(When you run out of responses, move on to question two.)*
2. In the story that you see, who or what do you think is the most important figure, shape, or object? What makes you think so? *(As soon as you are ready, move on to question three.)*
3. What emotions seem to be expressed in this story? What makes you think so? *(As soon as you are ready, move on to question four.)*
4. What can you tell from this work of art about the story of the person who made it or the time or place in which he or she lived? *(When you are finished, move on to question five.)*
5. Looking at the works of art around this one, what more can you discover about the stories of history or of art. *(Please remember there are no right or wrong answers in this QUEST.)*

Reflection question: Thinking back on the stories you have discovered, what have you learned from looking at this work of art? Have you learned anything about your own life story or the stories of others? *(Do you like this work of art more or less than you did in the beginning? Do you think it matters if you like it?)*

FOUNDATIONAL QUEST

Let's begin...

Here is a set of questions for exploring works of art. You can respond to them on your own or take turns with someone else or with a group of people.

Begin by choosing a work of art anywhere in the museum—it's your choice. Please try not to read anything about the work before you start your QUEST.

You will find that these questions invite different responses according to the work of art you select and depending on whether you answer them on your own or with others. You can use this MUSE QUEST again and again with many different works of art and in many different situations.

Please note...

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. You don't need an art background or any specific information to pursue this QUEST.

Preliminary question: Do you like this work of art? Why or why not? *(There are five questions in this QUEST. Please move on to question one.)*

1. What do you see in the work of art in front of you? Do you think everyone sees what you see? *(As soon as you are ready, move on to question two.)*
2. Is what you see in this work of art beautiful? Is it still art if it is not beautiful or if it causes you to feel uneasy? *(Whenever you are ready, please move on to question three.)*
3. Does this work of art speak to you? Is art a language? What is said through art that cannot be said through words? *(Move on to question four.)*
4. Why do you think the artist made this work of art? Why do artists make art? *(When you are finished, move on to question five.)*
5. Take a look at the works of art surrounding this one. Why do you think these objects are considered art? *(Please remember there are no right or wrong answers in this QUEST.)*

Reflection question: Think back on your previous observations. Is what you have discovered important? How might this work of art change the lives of people who look at it? *(Do you like this work of art more or less than you did in the beginning? Do you think it matters if you like it?)*

Example QUESTs for *Picturing Mary*

Break your students up into small groups (5–7 students per group is ideal). Provide each group with the QUESTs above and an image set (see examples below). Ask students to explore these works using the QUESTs as frameworks for their conversations. Remind students that the only rules of this experiment are to:

1. Look closely at each work of art,
2. Listen respectfully to one another's comments,
3. Contribute ideas to move the conversation along, and
4. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers.

Example 1

Aesthetic QUEST artwork



Guillaume de Marcillat (La Châtre, near Bourges, ca. 1467/70–Arezzo, 1529)
Deposition and Entombment (Deposizione e Sepoltura di Cristo), 1526
 Stained glass
 Palazzo Capponi alle Rovinate, Florence

Narrative QUEST artwork



Federico Barocci (Urbino, ca. 1535–1612)
Rest on the Flight into Egypt (Il Riposo durante la Fuga in Egitto), also called
Madonna of the Cherries (La Madonna delle Ciliegie), 1570–73
 Oil on canvas
 Vatican Museums, Vatican City; inv. 40377

Foundational QUEST artwork



Puccio Capanna (Florence/Assisi, act. ca. 1325–1350)
Madonna and Child with Annunciation and Female Saints (Regina Virginum), ca. 1330
 Tempera and gold on wood panel
 Vatican Museums, Vatican City; inv. 40170

Example 2

Aesthetic QUEST artwork



Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn (Leiden, 1606–Amsterdam, 1669)

The Death of the Virgin, 1639

Etching

Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire, Museum Purchase:

The Henry Melville Fuller Acquisition Fund; inv. 2010.26.19

Narrative QUEST artwork



Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio) (Near Milan, 1571–Porto Ercole, Tuscany, 1610)

Rest on the Flight into Egypt (Il Riposo durante la Fuga in Egitto), 1594–96

Oil on canvas

Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome

Foundational QUEST artwork



Gerard David (Oudewater, near Gouda, ca. 1460–Bruges, 1523)

The Annunciation, ca. 1490

Oil on oak panel

Detroit Institute of Arts, City of Detroit Purchase; inv. 27.201

Book of Hours Bookmaking Activity

The Book of Hours and Mary



Master of Martainville Workshop
(France, late 15th–early 16th
century)

Recto: *Annunciation and Visitation*;
Verso: Bird with its young, ca. 1490–
1500

Parchment page

Diocese of Prato (Deposit from
Private Collectors); inv. RFC072

Portable and personal aids to devotion were as important in the life of lay believers as larger public or semi-public works. From the late 13th century through the 15th century, one of the most popular forms was the Book of Hours. The central text in these small illustrated books was the Hours of the Virgin—a series eight texts recited at the eight canonical hours of the day. The accompanying images typically illustrated significant events in Mary's life. In this example by the Master of Martainville Workshop, images of the Annunciation and Visitation accompany for Matins (the wee hours of the morning).

Beyond the Hours of the Virgin, the contents of Books of Hours could vary, reflecting the specific needs of the purchaser. However, they often included a liturgical calendar enumerating feast days, Psalms, prayers to the Virgin, and the Office of the Dead.

The faithful who did not have the resources to commission altarpieces or smaller devotional works might purchase a Book of Hours. Though initially luxury objects for the very wealthy, the gradual development of mass-production by hand and the eventual arrival of the printing press made them accessible to ever wider audiences. For many families, it might have been the only book they owned; many literate adults had learned to read from a Book of Hours.

Best sellers in the 14th and 15th centuries, these books became less popular in the 16th century with the rise of Protestantism and increasing popularity of an even simpler aid to prayer: the rosary.

Make your own Book: Star Book with Tooled Metal Covers



This activity allows the maker to create their own special book. It does not have to be dedicated to the Virgin Mary or other religious ideas; instead, the maker should think about what is important to them, as those who made many Christian *Books of Hours* considered. The book and its cover should reflect what it will eventually contain, just like the books made by Master of Martainville Workshop seen on the previous page.

Questions to think about while making a book:

- Why were *Books of Hours* so important to their owners?
- What will your book contain?
- What works in *Picturing Mary* inspired you while making your book?

Materials

For 1 book:

- 5 square sheets of paper, any color (We used 80 lb. paper cut into 9 inch squares)
- Tongue depressors/bone folders
- Glue
- 2 36 gauge tooling metal or heavy duty aluminum foil (We used 6 in. squares)
- 2 Matte board or heavy cardboard (We used 5 inch squares)
- 2 Decorative papers (We used 4 ¾ inch squares)
- Stacks of newspapers
- Tools for creating design—blunt pencils, the ends of paint brushes, chop sticks, clay tools, etc.
- Scrap paper for rough drafts
- Assorted examples and pattern ideas
- Colored Sharpies
- Masking tape (optional)

Time

Allow for at least 75 minutes of total classroom time to complete this project.

Instructions

These instructions make a book with five pages, which is the minimum needed. More pages can easily be added *before* the cover is affixed.

A. Create diamond-fold pages.



1. Begin with a square sheet of paper. Each book requires five sheets.



2. Fold the paper in half diagonally making sure to line up the edges. Use tongue depressor or bone folder to set the crease. Open the paper.



3. Turn the paper over so that the diagonal fold points upward—we call this a mountain fold.



4. Fold the paper in half horizontally making sure to line up the edges. Use a tongue depressor or bone folder to set the crease. Open the paper.



5. Fold the paper in half vertically making sure to line up the edges. Use a tongue depressor or bone folder to set the crease. Open the paper.



6. Press finger down on the point in the center where all the fold lines cross.



7. Sides of paper will “pop” upward.



8. Pinch the paper together on the diagonal fold lines and bring pointed ends together.

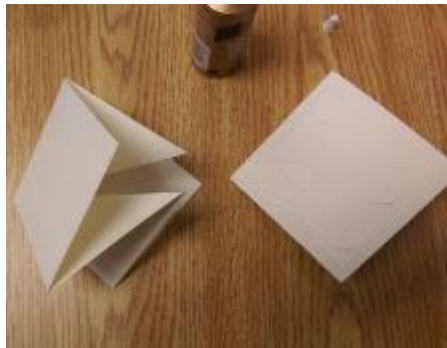


9. Fold the paper flat and run a tongue depressor or bone folder over the side facing up to set interior folds.

You now have one completed diamond-fold page.

10. Repeat this process with your four remaining sheets of paper.

B. Create page stack.



1. Take two of the completed pages. Put glue on the flat (square) side of one page. Orient the second page so that it opens in the same direction as the first one. Glue them together, aligning the edges. You now have a stack of two pages.



Closed



Open



2. Put glue on the visible side of the second page. Take your third completed page and orient it in the same direction as the first two pages. Glue it to the page stack, aligning the edges.

3. Continue this process with remaining pages. Completed page stack:



Closed



Open

C. Create tooled covers.

Safety note: Caution your students that the edges of the metal are very sharp. You can put masking tape around the edges as a protection if you choose.

1. Take inspiration from patterns and symbols in the exhibition, the patterns and examples provided, and your own imagination. Sketch out your design on scrap paper.
2. Place one sheet of metal on a giving surface (like a stack of newspapers). Center a piece of matte board on the metal and use a blunt pencil to trace around the board. This marks out the space that will be visible once your book is complete. Use the embossing tools to trace/draw you design on the metal. Remember that you are drawing on the back of the metal—whatever design you make will appear in the reverse when complete.
3. Experiment with different line widths and textures. You can also add some details from the front side of the metal to create different effects.
4. Once you are pleased with your composition, you may add color using Sharpies if you choose. The addition of color evokes stained glass windows and lacquer-on-metal plaques like those on view in *Picturing Mary*.

5. If you choose to decorate you back cover, repeat steps 1-4.



D. Assemble star book.



1. Set metal sheet design-side down on the table.



2. Glue matte board to the metal, centering it as closely as possible.



3. Using scissors, cut off the metal corners. The line of the cut should be just above the point of the matte board.



4. Fold the metal edges over the matte board. Be very careful of sharp edges.



5. Take a piece of decorative paper and glue it over the visible matte board and visible metal edges. Center it so that an equal margin of metal is still visible around the edges.



6. Repeat these steps to create the back cover of your book. Take your complete stack of diamond-fold pages and your front cover. Put glue on the one side of the stack and center it on the cover so that an even margin of decorative paper is visible on all the edges.



7. Repeat these steps with your back cover. If you have decorated both covers you will want to consider how to orient them in relation to the pages so that they are “right side up.”

You now have a completed Star Book with tooled metal covers.



Artist Fact Sheets

The following fact sheets discuss selected artists from the *Picturing Mary* and *A Global Icon* exhibitions. These can be printed and handed out, or used as a resource.

The selected artists are as follows:

- Sofonisba Anguissola
- Orsola Maddalena Caccia
- Artemisia Gentileschi
- Suor Plautilla Nelli
- Luisa Roldán
- Elisabetta Sirani

Sofonisba Anguissola

Consider this...

What do artists accomplish when images of the Virgin Mary are included in a work but are not the focal point?



Sofonisba Anguissola (ca. 1532–1625)
Self-Portrait at the Easel, 1556
 Oil on canvas
 26 x 22 ½ in. (66 x 57 cm)
 Muzeum-Zamek

Who was the artist?

Born in Cremona, Italy, **Sofonisba Anguissola (ca. 1532–1625)** was the eldest of seven children (six girls and one boy). Her father, Amilcare Anguissola, ensured that all of his children received a courtier's education as described in 16th-century treatises such as Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*.

While not an artist himself, Amilcare Anguissola encouraged all of his children in their artistic pursuits. He arranged for Anguissola to study under Bernadino Campi (1522–1591) and Bernadino Gatti (1495–1576) and worked diligently to raise awareness of her talents. His letters to Michelangelo (1475–1564) resulted in advice as well as praise for Anguissola's drawing *Boy Bitten by a Crayfish*, ca. 1554.

To his wife Sofonisba, of the Anguissola family, who was one of the world's famous women because of her nobility, her beauty, and her extraordinary natural gifts, and so outstanding in her representation of the human portrait that no one in her time was held in the same esteem, Horazius Lomellinus, in deepest pain, dedicates this final monument to her who, although small for such a woman, is great among mortals.

(Orazio Lomellini, headstone inscription for his wife, Sofonisba Anguissola)

In 1559, Anguissola's work drew the attention of Phillip II of Spain, and she was invited to become a lady-in-waiting to Queen Isabella. While a member of the Spanish court, Anguissola served as a portrait painter for the royal family as well as a drawing instructor for the queen. After the queen's death in 1568, Anguissola was asked to continue at court to take care of the *infantas*, Spanish princesses. She remained until the king arranged her marriage to an Italian nobleman.

What is being portrayed?

In *Self-Portrait at the Easel* (1556), Anguissola shows herself at work an intimate depiction of the Madonna and Child. Anguissola often used self-portraits to call attention to her talents and virtues. Here she emphasized her role as an artist.

First, consider the artist herself. She holds a paintbrush and maulstick, a tool used to steady the painter's dominant hand, is modestly attired, and looks out with a confident gaze that grabs the viewer's attention. By painting herself in action, Anguissola showed her talent in portraiture and announces her position as an artist.

By choosing the Madonna and Child as her subject, Anguissola illustrated her ability to render religious paintings. She also put herself in the position of St. Luke, the evangelist who, according to legend, painted the Virgin.

When was this portrait made?

Anguissola painted *Self-Portrait at the Easel* in 1556, about ten years after she began her training and three years before she was invited to the court of Phillip II of Spain. Her father often sent her work to acquaintances to raise awareness of her daughter's abilities, and this piece could easily function as a modern day business card.

How might this work compare with others?

With this essential question in mind, **"What do artists accomplish when images of the Virgin Mary are included in a work but are not the focal point?"**, compare Anguissola's self-portrait with the following:

In the galleries (*Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea*)

- Unknown Artist, Franconian School (Germany, mid-15th century), *Miraculous Mass of St. Martin of Tours*, ca. 1440; Tempera and gold on canvas and on wood panel; Allentown Art Museum, Samuel H. Kress Collection, 1961; inv. 1961.45
- Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio) (Near Milan, 1571–Porto Ercole, Tuscany, 1610), *Rest on the Flight into Egypt (Il Riposo durante la Fuga in Egitto)*, 1594–96; Oil on canvas; Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome
- Orsola Maddelena Caccia (Moncalvo, 1596-1676), *St. Luke the Evangelist in the Studio (San Luca Evangelista nello Studio)*, ca. 1625; Oil on canvas; Parrocchia Saint 'Antonio di Padova, Moncalvo, Asti

Online (*A Global Icon: Mary in Context*—<http://nmwa.org/global-icon>):

- Unknown Artist, Canteen, mid-13th century; Brass with silver inlay, 17 3/4 x 8 1/2 x 8 1/2 in.; Freer and Sackler Galleries; inv. F1941.10
- Unknown Artist, *Chapter 19 of Qur'an (Surat Maryam)*, 15th century; Ink and pigments on thin laid paper, 15 3/4 x 12 3/16 in.; Walters Art Museum; inv. W.563.274B
- Unknown Artist, *Nun's Emblem*, 18th century; Silk and silver thread embroidery, 7 in. diameter; Franz Mayer Collection

NMWA Educator's Guide for *Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea*

Orsola Maddalena Caccia

Consider this...

How did religious women express a personal identification with the Virgin Mary in the artwork they commissioned, created, and used?



Orsola Maddalena Caccia (Moncalvo, 1596–1676)
Madonna and Child with St. Anne (Madonna col Bambino e Sant'Anna),
 ca. 1630s
 Oil on canvas
 113 x 72 7/8 in. (287 x 185 cm)
 Parrocchia Sant'Antonio di Padova, Moncalvo, Asti

Who was the artist?

Born and raised in the provincial town of Moncalvo in Northwestern Italy, **Orsola Maddalena Caccia (1596–1676)** learned to paint from her father, Guglielmo. She served as his studio assistant until 1620, when she entered an Ursuline convent in Bianzé, Italy. Five years later, she returned to Moncalvo to take up residence in the convent established by her father in a wing of his house. He had received special dispensation so that his daughter could continue to serve as his assistant. At his death, she inherited his drawings, paintings, and tools.

Caccia eventually became Abbess of her convent and supported it financially through her artistic output. She also helped establish a painting studio in the convent and had students and assistants of her own. In addition to creating small devotional works and large altarpieces, Caccia produced still-life paintings. Her skill with such subject matter is equally evident in her religious paintings, where her finely detailed flowers, birds, and vessels take on symbolic meanings.

“Suddenly, an angel of the Lord stood in front of her, saying, “Anna, Anna, the Lord God has heard your prayer. You will conceive and give birth and your child will be spoken of everywhere people live. And Anna said, “As the Lord God lives, whether I give birth to either a male or a female child, I will bring it as an offering to the Lord my God and it will be a servant to him all the days of its life.” Next, two angels came, saying to her, “Look your husband Joachim is coming with his flocks.” For an angel of the Lord has gone down to Joachim, saying, “Joachim, Joachim, the Lord God has heard your prayers. Go down from here. Look, your wife Anna has conceived in her womb.”

(Gospel of James 4:1–4)

What is the subject?

Apocryphal texts, or non-scriptural works, like the Gospel of James, fleshed out the life of Mary and introduced her parents, Anna and Joachim, to Christians eager to know more about the Holy Family than the canonical Gospels revealed.

Here, Caccia portrayed Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and her mother St. Anne sharing a tender and very human moment. These three relatable beings appear fully engaged with one another. While baby Jesus looks sweetly up at his doting grandmother, the Virgin Mary gazes lovingly down at her son. Only the flanking putti indicate the spiritual nature of the subject. The distinctive array of flowers along the bottom of the composition, serve as symbolic representations of Virgin's purity and Jesus's sacrificial death and function as Caccia's signature.

When was this work created?

Caccia created this work at a time when emphasizing the humanity of Jesus and Mary was paramount for the faithful. Here, the artist portrayed the human lineage of Jesus: Mary was born of Anne, but without original sin (symbolized by the apple in Jesus's hand), because she had been chosen to bear the son of God.

Further, the Virgin Mary was held as exemplum for women. Images of her, her mother, and her cousin Elizabeth provided lessons to women on how to be compassionate wives and mothers. Mary's virginity set the standard for those who pursued lives as consecrated nuns. They should carry Jesus in their hearts just as Mary carried him in her womb.

What purposes did this painting serve?

This painting may reflect Caccia's personal experience of intergenerational female relationships as an Ursuline nun. From its founding by Angela Merici (1474-1540) in 1535, the Company of St. Ursula tasked older nuns to mentor newer arrivals to the convent. The younger girls (Daughters) were guided in their spiritual development by older, more experienced members (Mothers).

Though the imagery had personal significance for Caccia, neither she nor her sisters in the order would have had access to this painting for their own devotion once it left the cloister. The work was destined for a side altar in the Church of St. Anthony of Padua in Moncalvo, where it still resides.

How might this work compare with others?

With this essential question in mind, **"How did religious women express a personal identification with the Virgin Mary in the artwork they commissioned, created, and used?"**, compare Caccia's altarpiece with the following:

In the galleries (*Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea*)

- Albrecht Dürer (Nuremberg, 1471–1528), *The Annunciation*, ca. 1502–04; Woodcut; 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 8 $\frac{5}{16}$ in. (29.8 x 21.1 cm); National Gallery of Art Washington, D.C.; Rosenwald Collection, 1943.3.3580
- Orsola Maddalena Caccia (Moncalvo, 1596–1676), *Mystical Marriage of the Blessed Osanna Andreasi (Matrimonio Mistico della Beata Osanna Andreasi)*, 1648; Oil on canvas; Museo Diocesano Francesco Gonzaga, Mantua
- Elisabetta Sirani (Bologna, 1638–1665), *The Holy Family with St. Elizabeth and St. John the Baptist*, ca. 1650–60; Etching on paper; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C., Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; inv. 1986.290

Online (*A Global Icon: Mary in Context*—<http://nmwa.org/global-icon>):

- Suor Plautilla Nelli (Florence, 1523–1588), *Lamentation of Christ*, 1550; Oil on panel; 113 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 75 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (288 x 192 cm); Museo di San Marco, Florence
- Unknown Artist, Nun's Emblem, 18th century; Silk and silver thread embroidery, 7 in. diameter; Franz Mayer Collection

Artemisia Gentileschi

Consider this...

How can nudity in art contribute to our understanding of the subject? In your opinion, when is nudity in art unnecessary or offensive?

How did depictions of *Maria Lactans*, or nursing Madonnas, reinforce church opinion of the time? How do they reflect contemporary debates about breastfeeding?



Artemisia Gentileschi (Rome, 1593–Naples?, 1656)
Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), 1609–10
Oil on canvas
Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence; inv. 1890 no. 2129

Who was the artist?

Highly esteemed among the Italian Baroque artists of her time, **Artemisia Gentileschi (Rome, 1593–Naples?, 1656)** is often credited with spreading the dramatic lighting of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio's (1571–1610) style outside of Rome. Both the quality of her paintings and her extraordinary accomplishments in a male-dominated society have made her a legendary figure.

As it was commonplace in all but the most progressive cities for Renaissance women to be barred from receiving formal artistic education, Gentileschi trained in the studio of her father, Orazio Gentileschi (1563–1639), a Caravaggisti. Owing to their similar aesthetic, entwined professional relationship, and Gentileschi's dearth of signed works, scholars today disagree on the attributions of many paintings from the family workshop.

After marrying artist Pierantonio Stiattesi, Gentileschi left her father's studio and moved to Florence where she became the first woman member of the Accademia del Disegno. She continued to work, gave birth to four children, and returned to Rome in 1621 to re-establish her studio. Her husband left Gentileschi around 1623.

Gentileschi built a strong reputation and international career. Among other patrons, she worked for Cosimo II de Medici, King Philip IV of Spain, and Charles I of England.

Why is this art significant?

A born talent, Gentileschi completed several of her most famous works, including this *Madonna and Child* (1609–1610), in her late teenage years. She regularly turned to strong female figures from the Bible as subject matter, often exploring the physical strength and emotional fortitude of such women. Note in this work Mary's solid, stable form and the way in which she envelopes the Christ child. This austere painting focuses the viewers' attention on the humility, humanity, and interconnectedness of the figures. At once these figures appear to be both human and divine. Take a close look to see the subtle halos that crown both Mary and Jesus.

What makes this art a reflection of its sociohistorical context?

At a time when many Christians were illiterate, art communicated important messages about values and responsibilities to the masses. The Catholic Church, the primary art patron throughout Europe during the Renaissance and Baroque eras, commissioned artworks that expressed its tenets in a clear, "readable" visual language.

In response to high infant mortality rates, widespread famine, and the Black Death that decimated Europe's population beginning in the 14th century, the Catholic Church encouraged mothers of all socioeconomic backgrounds to breastfeed their own children, rather than to hire wet-nurses to accomplish this task. Artworks depicting nursing Madonnas, or *Maria Lactans*, gained favor during this time. Depictions like Gentileschi's reinforced the church's stance on breastfeeding, provided a relatable and supreme role model for new mothers, and made visible that a human mother nurtured the son of God, implying that through this relationship Christ was both man and divine.

...figures shall not be painted or adorned with a beauty exciting to lust... there [should] be nothing seen that is disorderly, or that is unbecomingly or confusedly arranged, nothing that is profane, nothing indecorous, seeing that holiness becometh the house of God.

(The Council of Trent's decree on religious imagery, 1563)

Artworks showing Mary bare breasted or in the act of breastfeeding diminished in popularity in the wake of the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Church's response, the Counter-Reformation. The Protestant Reformation began in 1517 when Martin Luther publicly posted his *The Ninety-Five Theses*, which addresses his concerns with the Catholic Church. Luther's concerns included the creation and veneration of religious imagery. In response, the Catholic Church reasserted the importance of religious artwork in the lives of believers. During the Council of Trent's 1563 convening the Catholic Church did revise its standards governing the artistic representations of sacred subjects. Most notably, it forbade unnecessary nudity. As a result, Depictions of nursing Madonnas fell largely out of favor in the decades that followed.

How does this work compare with others?

With these essential questions in mind, “**How can nudity in art contribute to our understanding of the subject? In your opinion, when is nudity in art unnecessary or offensive?**”, compare Gentileschi’s *Madonna and Child* with the following:

In the galleries (*Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea*)

- Luca della Robbia (Florence?, ca. 1400–Florence, 1482), *Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino)*, ca. 1430; Polychromed terracotta; Chiesa di Santa Felicita, Florence
- Fra Filippo Lippi (Florence, ca. 1406–Spoleto, 1469), *Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino)*, ca. 1466–69; Tempera on wood panel; Provincia di Firenze, Palazzo Medici Riccardi, Florence
- Elisabetta Sirani (Bologna, 1638–1665), *Virgin and Child*, 1663; Oil on canvas; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C., Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Conservation funds generously provided by the Southern California State Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts; inv. 1986.289

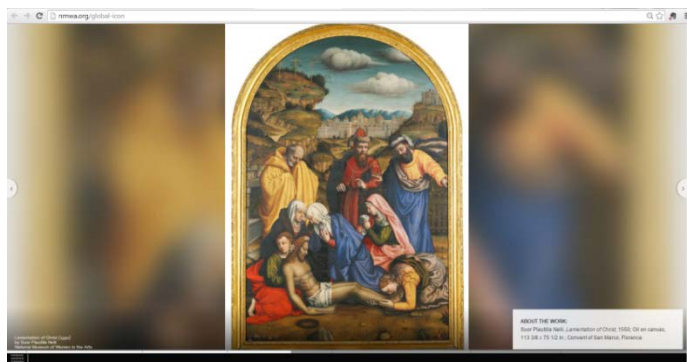
Online (*A Global Icon: Mary in Context*–<http://nmwa.org/global-icon>):

- Unknown Artist, *Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus from a Falnama (Book of Divination) Manuscript*, ca. 1600; Gouache on cloth, 13 x 8 1/3 in.; Courtesy of Sam Fogg, London
- Farrukh Beg, *The Madonna and Child*, ca. 1605–10; Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 6 3/8 x 4 3/8 in.; Freer and Sackler Galleries; inv. F1907.155

Suor Plautilla Nelli

Consider this...

What do artists accomplish through their different approaches to portraying the Virgin Mary's grief at Christ's suffering and death?



Suor Plautilla Nelli (Florence, 1523–1588)
Lamentation of Christ, 1550

Oil on panel

113 3/8 x 75 1/2 in. (288 x 192 cm)

Museo di San Marco, Florence

Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>

Who was the artist?

Suor Plautilla Nelli is one of only four women to whom Giorgio Vasari gives more than passing mention in his *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1568). Born to a wealthy Florentine family, Nelli entered the Dominican convent of Santa Caterina da Siena (now destroyed) at age 14 and eventually served as prioress three times.

“The best works from her hand are those that she has copied from others, wherein she shows that she would have done marvelous things if she had enjoyed, as men do, advantages for studying, devoting herself to drawing and copying living and natural objects.”

(Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, 1568)

Santa Caterina housed the daughters of many of the city's finest artisans and had a tradition of art production, which would have been a nurturing environment as the self-taught Nelli developed her skills. She also had access to a cache of drawings by the Dominican friar-artist Fra Bartolomeo (1472–1517), whose work influenced her style and subject matter.

By age 35, Nelli had completed several large paintings for the convent and was receiving commissions for smaller devotional works from Florentine nobles. Income from her commissions helped support her convent. Despite the many paintings Vasari credits to Nelli, only a few have been securely identified.

Vasari and other early writers on Nelli lauded her artistic skills as well as the moral virtues of her devout life.

What is the subject of this work?

Lamentation of Christ (1550) is typical of Nelli's work in its vivid portrayal of emotion. Portions of her composition resemble a painting by Fra Bartolomeo of the same subject. But Nelli departed from his example in ways that signify her own experience and the intended purpose of the painting.

Significantly, she emphasized the raw emotion of the mourners by meticulously rendering red rimmed eyes and streaming tears. Yet they are restrained, not prostrate, in their grief. Nelli also included more female figures in her composition than had Fra Bartolomeo. The collective sorrow of the Virgin Mary and the other women is the focus of her painting—Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and the apostle Peter play only a supporting role.

Where was the painting located?

Nelli created this *Lamentation of Christ* for a side altar in the public church attached to her convent. Thus, she was both the producer and part of its intended audience. It is also possible that she commissioned the work. Today, the painting is displayed in the large rectory of the monastery of San Marco, Florence, which stands near Santa Caterina's original location.

When was Nelli working?

Suor Plautilla Nelli established a public identity as a painter in Florence fulfilling commissions for churches, her own and other convents, and Florentine nobility. This achievement would have been unusual for any woman of the time, but it is remarkable for a nun. Significantly, for most of Nelli's life, Santa Caterina was not a cloistered convent. Members of the order were active in the world, caring for the sick, collecting alms, and serving as role models of chastity and compassion. Such autonomy gave her access to artworks for study and allowed her to meet patrons, negotiate contracts, and receive payments, which she handed over to Santa Caterina.

Following the Council of Trent (1545–1563), the Church called for strict cloistering, which was enforced in Florence beginning in 1575. Santa Caterina's archives record the interaction between the prioress and the apostolic visitor sent to ensure the enclosure: "[...] the prioress addressed him kindly and said: *monsignor* and Reverend father, we are not living in *clausura* but we have our Rule and constitution which was approved by Pope Paul III and they do not oblige us to live in *clausura*, we do not have it and we do not want it. Thus the said Reverend bishop became so furious that he addressed the prioress and told her that she was being arrogant [...] and that he was going to give her the punishment that she deserved." Their appeal for maintaining autonomy was ultimately unsuccessful.

Why does this work look the way it does?

This altarpiece was a devotional aid for the faithful. The eye-level view of Christ's injured body and overt signs of grief were intended to induce emotional empathy in viewers. The representation of tears was likely to move worshippers themselves to tears—tears of compassion for Christ's physical suffering and for Mary's emotional suffering. The group of women surrounding Mary compounds the scene's intense emotionalism and reminds us that

NMWA Educator's Guide for *Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea*

women in many cultures are the primary mourners. Certainly, the members of Nelli's order would have identified deeply with these women.

How might this work compare with others?

With this essential question in mind, **“What do artists accomplish through their different approaches to portraying the Virgin Mary’s grief at Christ’s suffering and death?”**, compare Nelli’s altarpiece with the following:

In the galleries (*Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea*)

- Master of Sant’Anastasia (Verona, 14th century), *Crucifixion (Crocifissione)*, 14th century; Stone; Olivetti Rason Collection, Florence
- Guillaume de Marcillat (La Châtre, near Bourges, ca. 1467/70–Arezzo, 1529), *Deposition and Entombment (Deposizione e Sepoltura di Cristo)*, 1526; Stained glass; Palazzo Capponi alle Rovinate, Florence
- Unknown Artist (Southern Germany, early 16th century), Chasuble cross embroidered with Pietà, Angels, and Saints, ca. first half of 16th century; Wool embroidered with silk and gold thread; Diocese of Prato (Deposit from Private Collectors); inv. RF985

Online (*A Global Icon: Mary in Context*—<http://nmwa.org/global-icon>):

- Unknown Artist, *Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows*, 18th century; Polychromed wood, 17 3/4 x 17 3/4 x 9 3/4 in.; Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels
- Unknown artist, *Our Lady of Sorrows*, 19th century; Oil on canvas, 32 3/4 x 23 3/4 in.; Joslyn Art Museum; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Lowell; inv. 1964.113

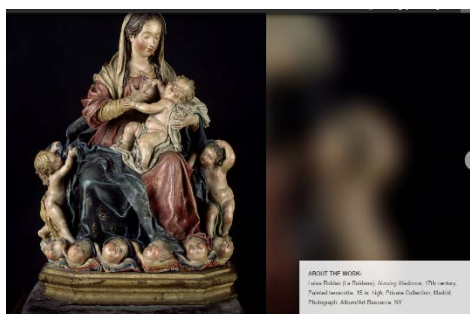
Luisa Roldán

Consider this...

What moments in the lives of the Virgin Mary and Jesus has the artist chosen to depict? What message(s) might he/she be communicating through these choices?

What is a more realistic artistic representation of a person, a sculpture or a painting? Make a case for your answer.

For centuries, artists worked in studios to create artworks in collaboration with a master. In these situations, who do you feel has the right to claim authorship and sign completed artworks? What challenges might this tradition have presented to young artists? What present-day debates regarding the attribution of creative work come to mind?



Luisa Roldán (Seville, 1652–Madrid, 1706)
Nursing Madonna, 17th century
Painted terracotta
15 in. high
Private Collection, Madrid; Photo Credit: Album/Art
Resource, NY
Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>

Who was the artist?

Born in Seville, Spain, **Luisa Roldán (1652–1706)**, known as La Roldana, learned to model, sculpt, and polychrome terracotta and wood devotional sculptures from her father, artist Pedro Roldán. She, along with her brothers and sisters, contributed to the family's studio production and, thereby, its financial stability.

In 17th-century Spain, aspiring artists like Roldán typically trained and worked in a master's studio. These artists rarely signed their work, and, as a result, they did not receive full credit for their artistic output. Creating art within a studio was a collaborative process, though the master received the bulk of the recognition and revenue.

Upon her marriage to artist Luis Antonio Navarro de los Arcos, Roldán established her own studio and began accepting church and private commissions. Her first independent commission was in Cádiz, a coastal town about 80 miles south of Seville, where she lived from 1686 to 1688. Celebrating her new-found independence, she began signing her works at this time.

In 1692, four years after Roldán moved to Madrid, King Charles II appointed her the official female court sculptor. She continued to serve in this role under King Philip V. Her works of the time are proudly inscribed “La Roldana, Escultora de Cámara”.

Despite her honorific posts and her solid professional reputation, Roldán struggled financially throughout her career. Extant letters indicate that she repeatedly wrote to the Spanish monarch requesting payment for her work. Given Spain’s economic crisis in the late 1600s, it is unlikely that she received full compensation for her time at Court.

One of the few documented women sculptors of the 17th century, Roldán is known both for her full-sized wooden devotional sculptures and small terracotta scenes. She was lauded for her life-like, humanizing portrayal of divine subjects.

Why is this art significant?

Roldán referred to her painted terracotta compositions as “jewels.” Scholars identify her figure groups as distinctive for their time and consider them precursors to nativity scenes that grew in popularity in the 18th century.

In these works, the artist depicted members of the Holy Family engaging in universal domestic activities. Notice Roldán’s attention to details, including the depictions of billowing fabrics, use of vibrant colors, and delicately rendered facial features. The artist’s physical representations of Mary were likely inspired by earlier artistic renderings of the Virgin, as well as the prevailing ideals of beauty in Spain during the artist’s lifetime.

Doña Luisa Roldán, Eminent Sculptor

She had the singular grace for modeling small pieces in terracotta, of which she made several admirable things that I have seen in this Court [of King Charles II] in glass cases, such as the Virgin with her precious Child.... She left an image of a life-size Jesus of Nazareth of such extraordinary beauty and so commanding of compassion at the same time that it was [a] source of wonder and amazement.... I was so thunderstruck at its sight that it seemed irreverent not to be on my knees to look at it, for it really appeared to be the original itself.

(Antonio Palomino, *Lives of the Eminent Spanish Painters and Sculptors*, 1724)

What purpose did this object serve?

This small artwork and others like it were designed to sit on tables in private homes. Owners purchased these works as devotional pieces for their family. The naturalistic figures and intricate details of these tableaux invite close looking, contemplation, and prayer. These works make the unseen tangible and relatable by placing divine subjects in the viewers’ own time and space. They act as intercessors for the faithful, bringing believers closer to God.

How might these works compare with others?

With these essential questions in mind, **“What moments in the lives of the Virgin Mary and Jesus has the artist chosen to depict? What message(s) might he/she be communicating through these choices?”**, compare Roldán’s terracotta sculptures with the following:

In the galleries (*Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea*):

- Unknown Artist, Rhenish School (Germany, 14th century), *Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino)*, 14th century; Boxwood; Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence; inv. C 1351
- Benedetto da Maiano (Florence, 1442–1497) and Bernardo di Stefano Rosselli (Florence, ca. 1450–1526), *Madonna and Child Giving Blessing (Madonna col Bambino Benedicente)*, ca. 1490–1500; Polychromed terracotta; Grimaldi Fava Collection

Online (*A Global Icon: Mary in Context*—<http://nmwa.org/global-icon>):

- Unknown Artist, *Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus from a Falnama (Book of Divination) Manuscript*, ca. 1600; Gouache on cloth, 13 x 8 1/3 in.; Courtesy of Sam Fogg, London

Elisabetta Sirani

Consider this...

What identifies an image of a mother and a child as the Madonna and Child?



Elisabetta Sirani (Bologna, 1638–1665)

Virgin and Child, 1663

Oil on canvas

34 x 27 1/2 in. (86.3 x 69.9 cm)

National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C., Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina

Holladay; Conservation funds generously provided by the Southern California State Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts; inv. 1986.289

Who was the artist?

According to written records, when she died at twenty-seven, the Italian artist **Elisabetta Sirani (1638–1665)** had already produced 200 paintings, drawings, and etchings. An independent painter by nineteen, Sirani ran her family's workshop. When her father became incapacitated by gout, she supported her parents, three siblings, and herself entirely through her art.

Trained by her father, Sirani was encouraged in her career by Count Carlo Cesare Malvasia, a family friend and influential art critic. She became known for her ability to paint beautifully finished canvases so quickly that art lovers visited her studio from far and wide to watch her work.

Sirani's portraits, mythological subjects, and especially her images of the Holy Family and the Virgin and Child gained international fame. Her works were acquired by wealthy, noble, and even royal patrons, including the Grand Duke Cosimo III de Medici.

I lived in the adoration of that merit, which in her was of supreme quality, and of that virtue, which was far from ordinary, and of incomparable humility, indescribable modesty, inimitable goodness.

(Count Carlo Cesare Malvasia, an art critic and biographer)

When Sirani died—suddenly after experiencing stomach pains—her father suspected she had been poisoned by a jealous maid. The servant was tried for but acquitted of this crime, and an

autopsy revealed numerous lacerations in the artist's stomach, presumably evidence of perforated ulcers.

Sirani's funeral was an elaborate affair involving formal orations, special poetry and music, and an enormous catafalque decorated with a life-size sculpture of the deceased. In addition to her substantial oeuvre, Sirani left an important legacy through her teaching. Her pupils included her two sisters, Barbara and Anna Maria, and more than a dozen other young women who became professional painters.

What is the significance of this art?

Sirani's *Virgin and Child* (1663) portrays the Virgin Mary as young Italian mother gazing affectionately at her baby rather than the frontal, regal queen of Heaven and her son favored in Byzantine depictions. However, this young mother is still wearing the red dress and blue veil often worn by the Virgin Mary in depictions, and there are other hints in the work that point to the divine status of the two figures.

The Christ child playfully leans back to crown his mother with a garland of roses, indicating both the Virgin Mary's status as queen of Heaven and being a "rose without thorns". Also, the ornamental gold tassel at the corner of the pillow on which the Christ child rests indicates that this is not your average baby.

Where was this work painted?

Sirani spent her life in Bologna, a city famous for its progressive attitude toward women's rights and for producing successful female artists. Her native city also influenced *Virgin and Child*. In this piece, the Virgin Mary is wearing the turban favored by peasant women in Bologna.

How might this work compare with others?

With this essential question in mind, **"When does an image of a mother and a child become a Madonna and Child depiction?"**, compare Sirani's *Virgin and Child* with the following:

In the galleries (*Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea*)

- Puccio Capanna (Florence/Assisi, act. ca. 1325–1350), *Madonna and Child with Annunciation and Female Saints (Regina Virginum)*, ca. 1330; Tempera and gold on wood panel; 14 3/8 × 9 1/2 in. (36.5 × 24 cm); Vatican Museums, Vatican City; inv. 40170
- Pontorno (Jacopo Carrucci) (Pontorno, near Empoli, 1494–Florence, ca. 1556/57), *Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino)*, 1527; Oil on wood panel; 41 3/4 × 31 1/2 × 2 3/8 in. (106 × 80 × 6 cm); Palazzo Capponi alle Rovinate, Florence
- Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (Venice, 1696–Madrid, 1770), *Madonna of the Goldfinch*, ca. 1767–70; Oil on canvas; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Samuel H. Kress Collection; inv. 1943.4.40

Online (*A Global Icon: Mary in Context*—<http://nmwa.org/global-icon>):

- Unknown Artist, *The Virgin of Montserrat*, also known as *La Moreneta*, 12th century; Polychromed wood, 37 1/2 in. high; Monastery of Santa Maria de Montserrat, Spain; Photograph: Album/Art Resource, NY
- Unknown Artist, *Madonna and Child*, 1690–1710; Porcelain, 15 x 3 1/2 x 3 in.; Peabody Essex Museum; Museum Purchase, 2001; inv. AE85957
- Unknown Artist, *Pendant Icon*, 17th–18th century; Wood and tempera paint, 3 3/4 x 2 3/4 in.; Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund; inv. 1997.81.1

Compare/Contrast Questions

To answer these questions, refer to example works which can be found at the end of this guide.

What do artists accomplish when images of the Virgin Mary are included in a work but are not the focal point?

Example works to consider:

Unknown Artist
Chapter 19 of Qur'an (Surat Maryam), 15th century
Ink and pigments on thin laid paper
15 3/4 x 12 3/16 in.
Walters Art Museum; inv. W.563.274B
Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>

Unknown Artist, Franconian School (Germany, mid-15th century)
Miraculous Mass of St. Martin of Tours, ca. 1440
Tempera and gold on canvas on wood panel
Allentown Art Museum, Samuel H. Kress Collection, 1961; inv. 1961.45

Suor Plautilla Nelli, *Lamentation of Christ*, 1550
Oil on canvas
113 3/8 x 75 1/2 in.
Convent of San Marco, Florence
Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>

What do artists accomplish through their different approaches to portraying the Virgin Mary's grief at Christ's suffering and death?

Example works to consider

Unknown Artist (Southern Germany, early 16th century)
Chasuble cross embroidered with Pietà, Angels, and Saints,
ca. first half of 16th century
Wool embroidered with silk and gold thread
Diocese of Prato (Deposit from Private Collectors); inv. RF985

Unknown Artist
Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, 18th century
Polychromed wood
17 3/4 x 17 3/4 x 9 3/4 in.
Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels
Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>

Guillaume de Marcillat (La Châtre, near Bourges, ca. 1467/70–Arezzo, 1529)
Deposition and Entombment (Deposizione e Sepoltura di Cristo), 1526
Stained glass
Palazzo Capponi alle Rovinate, Florence

How can nudity in art contribute to our understanding of the subject? In your opinion, when is nudity in art unnecessary or offensive?

Example works to consider:

Fra Filippo Lippi (Florence, ca. 1406–Spoleto, 1469)
Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), ca. 1466–69
Tempera on wood panel
Provincia di Firenze, Palazzo Medici Riccardi, Florence

Unknown Artist
Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus from a Falmama (Book of Divination) Manuscript, ca. 1600
Gouache on cloth
13 x 8 1/3 in.
Courtesy of Sam Fogg, London
Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>

Orsola Maddalena Caccia (Moncalvo, 1596–1676)
Madonna and Child with St. Anne (Madonna col Bambino e Sant'Anna), ca. 1630s
Oil on canvas
Parrocchia Sant'Antonio di Padova, Moncalvo, Asti

How did religious women express a personal identification with the Virgin Mary in the artwork they commissioned, created, and used?

Example works to consider:

Albrecht Dürer (Nuremberg, 1471–1528)
The Annunciation, ca. 1502–04
Woodcut
11 3/4 x 8 5/16 in. (29.8 x 21.1 cm)
National Gallery of Art Washington, D.C.; Rosenwald Collection, 1943.3.3580

Elisabetta Sirani (Bologna, 1638–1665)
The Holy Family with St. Elizabeth and St. John the Baptist, ca. 1650–60
Etching on paper
National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C., Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; inv. 1986.290

Unknown Artist
Nun's Emblem, 18th century
Silk and silver thread embroidery
7 in. diameter
Franz Mayer Collection
Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>

What identifies an image of a mother and a child as the Madonna and Child?

Example works to consider:

Unknown Artist
The Virgin of Montserrat, also known as *La Moreneta*, 12th century
Polychromed wood
37 1/2 in. high
Monastery of Santa Maria de Montserrat, Spain; Photograph: Album/Art Resource, NY
Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>

Unknown Artist
Pendant Icon, 17th–18th century
Wood and tempera paint
3 3/4 x 2 3/4 in.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund; inv. 1997.81.1
Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>

Unknown Artist
Madonna and Child, 1690–1710
Porcelain
15 x 3 1/2 x 3 in.
Peabody Essex Museum; Museum Purchase, 2001; inv. AE85957
Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>

What moments in the lives of the Virgin Mary and Jesus has the artist chosen to depict? What message(s) might he/she be communicating through these choices?

Example works to consider:

Unknown Artist, Rhenish School (Germany, 14th century)
Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), 14th century
Boxwood
Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence; inv. C 1351

Benedetto da Maiano (Florence, 1442–1497) and Bernardo di Stefano Rosselli (Florence, ca. 1450–1526)

Madonna and Child Giving Blessing (Madonna col Bambino Benedicente), ca. 1490–1500

Polychromed terracotta

Grimaldi Fava Collection

Master of Sant'Anastasia (Verona, 14th century)

Crucifixion (Crocifissione), 14th century

Stone

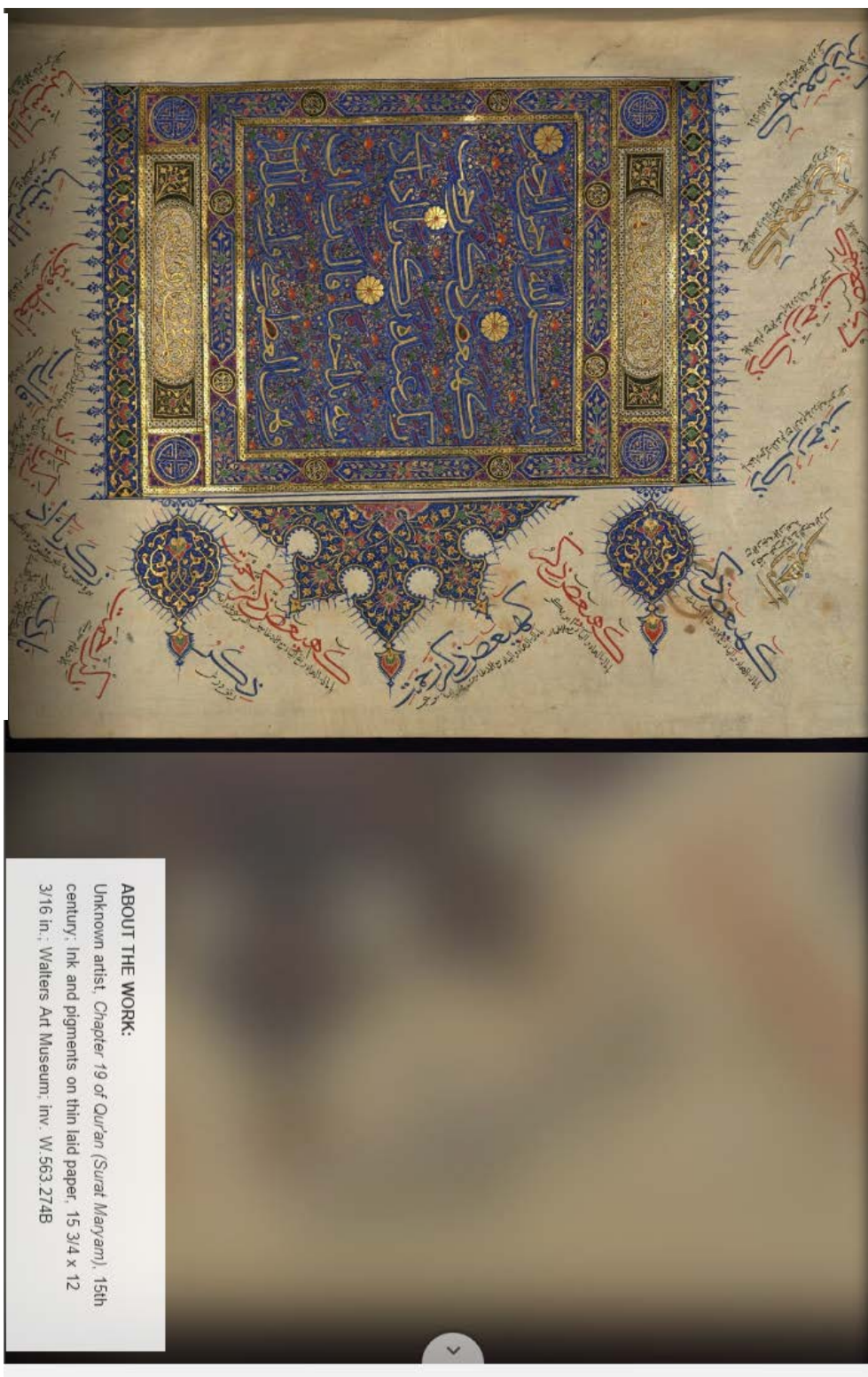
Olivetti Rason Collection, Florence

Reproductions: Selected Images



ABOUT THE WORK:
Unknown artist. Canteen, mid-13th century. Brass with silver inlay. 17 3/4 x 8 1/2 x 8 1/2 in., Freer and Sackler Galleries; inv. F1941.10

Unknown Artist
Canteen, mid-13th century
Brass with silver inlay
17 3/4 x 8 1/2 x 8 1/2 in.
Freer and Sackler Galleries; inv. F1941.10
Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>



Unknown Artist
Chapter 19 of Quran (Surat Maryam), 15th century
Ink and pigments on thin laid paper
15 3/4 x 12 3/16 in.
Walters Art Museum; inv. W.563.274B
Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>



Unknown Artist, Franconian School (Germany, mid-15th century)
Miraculous Mass of St. Martin of Tours, ca. 1440
Tempera and gold on canvas on wood panel
Allentown Art Museum, Samuel H. Kress Collection, 1961; inv. 1961.45



Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio) (Near Milan, 1571–Porto Ercole, Tuscany, 1610)

Rest on the Flight into Egypt (Il Riposo durante la Fuga in Egitto), 1594–96

Oil on canvas

Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome



Orsola Maddalena Caccia (Moncalvo, 1596–1676)

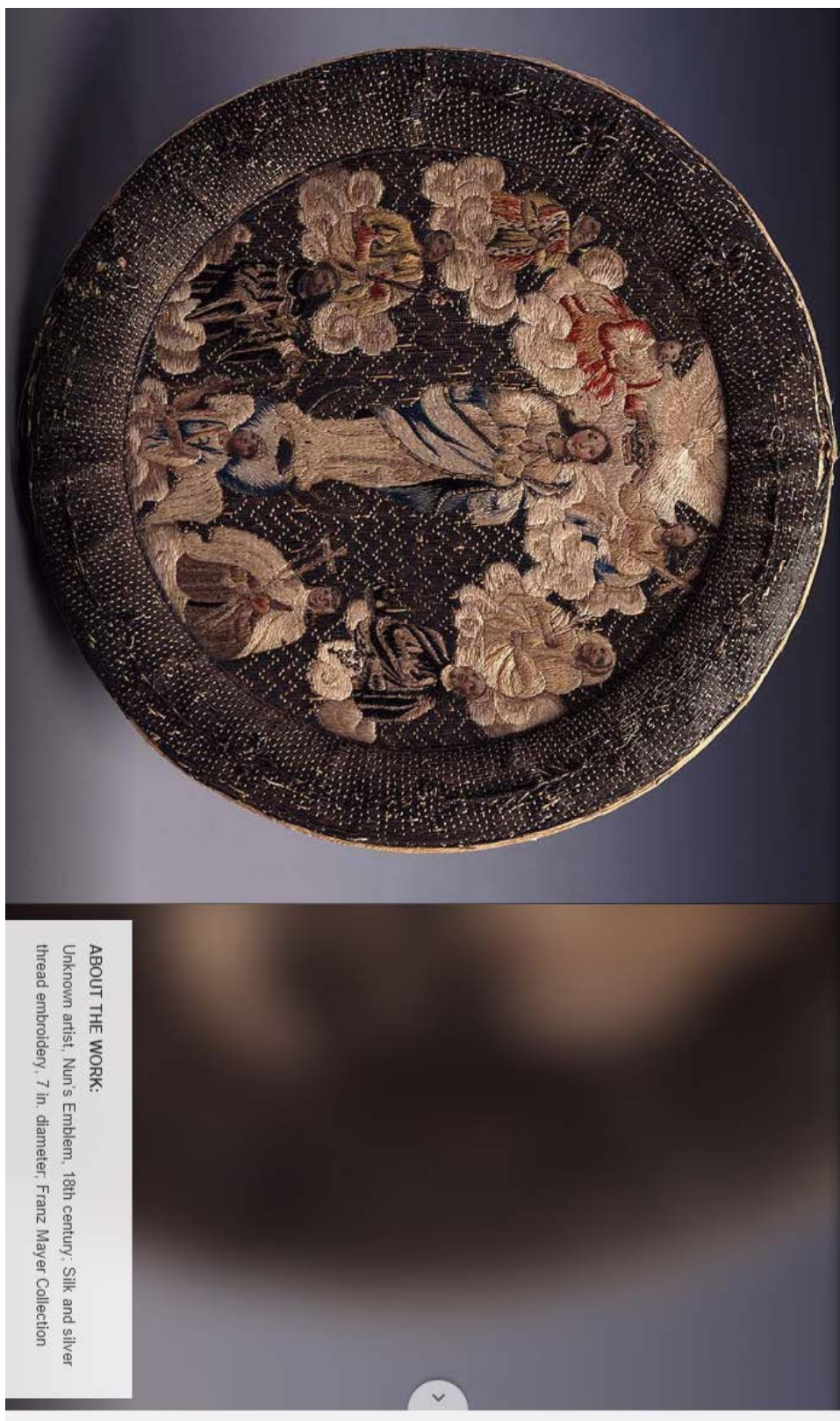
St. Luke the Evangelist in the Studio (San Luca Evangelista nello Studio), ca. 1625

Oil on canvas

Parrocchia Sant'Antonio di Padova, Moncalvo, Asti

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Unknown Artist
Nun's Emblem, 18th century
Silk and silver thread embroidery
7 in. diameter
Franz Mayer Collection
Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>





ABOUT THE WORK:
Suor Plautilla Nelli, *Lamentation of Christ*, 1550; Oil on
canvas, 113 3/8 x 75 1/2 in.; Convent of San Marco,
Florence

Suor Plautilla Nelli, *Lamentation of Christ*, 1550
Oil on canvas
113 3/8 x 75 1/2 in.
Convent of San Marco, Florence
Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>



Master of
Sant'Anastasia
(Verona, 14th
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Crucifixion
(*Crocifissione*),
14th century
Stone
Olivetti Rason
Collection,
Florence



Unknown Artist (Southern Germany, early 16th century)
Chasuble cross embroidered with Pietà, Angels, and Saints,
ca. first half of 16th century
Wool embroidered with silk and gold thread
Diocese of Prato (Deposit from Private Collectors); inv. RF985



Guillaume de Marcillat (La Châtre, near Bourges, ca. 1467/70–Arezzo, 1529)

Deposition and Entombment (Deposizione e Sepoltura di Cristo), 1526

Stained glass

Palazzo Capponi alle Rovinate, Florence

Unknown Artist

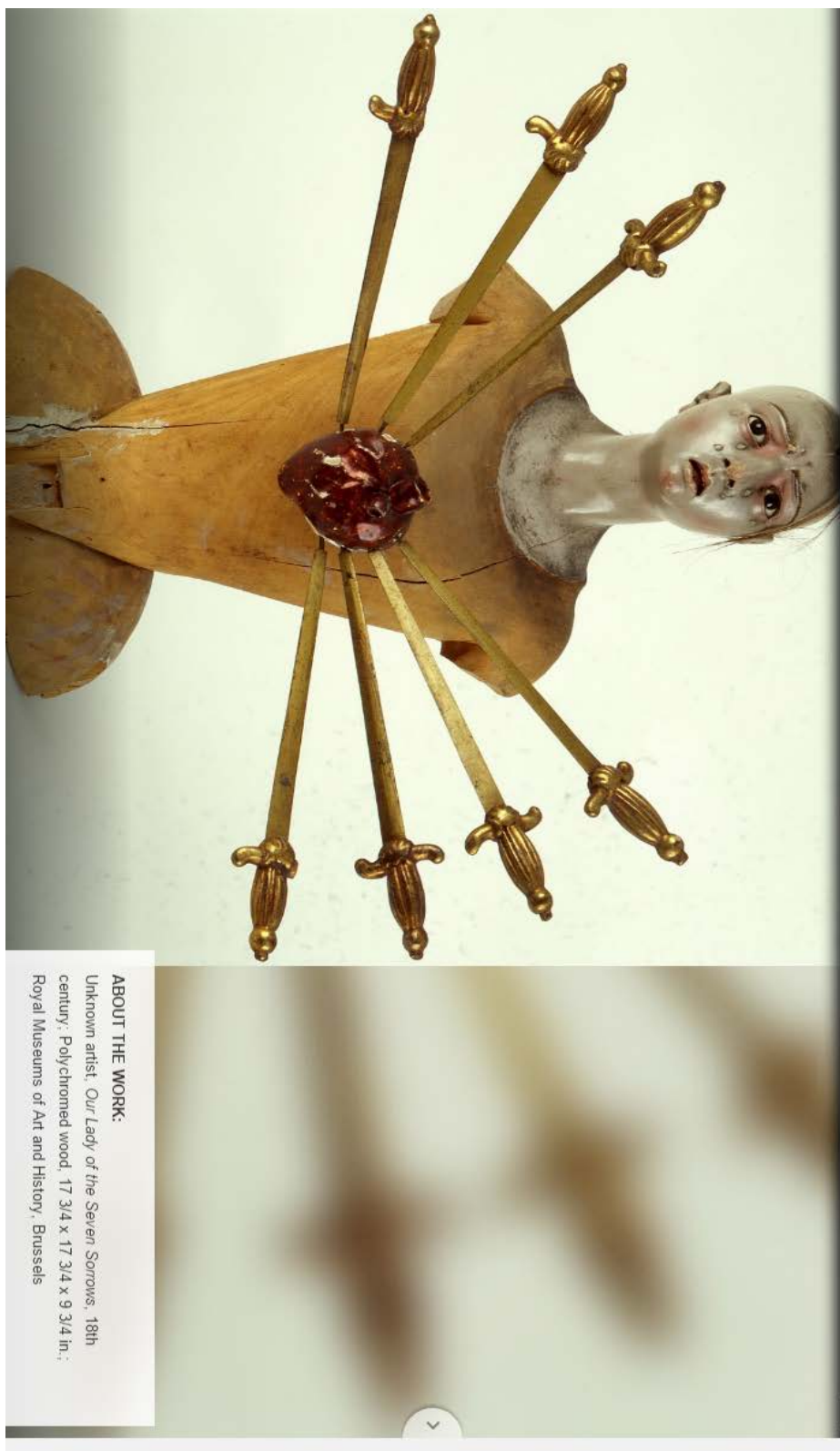
Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, 18th century

Polychromed wood

17 3/4 x 17 3/4 x 9 3/4 in.

Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels

Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>



ABOUT THE WORK:

Unknown artist, *Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows*, 18th century; Polychromed wood, 17 3/4 x 17 3/4 x 9 3/4 in.; Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels



Artemisia Gentileschi (Rome, 1593–Naples?, 1656)

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

Oil on canvas

Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence; inv. 1890 no. 2129

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Luca della Robbia (Florence?, ca. 1400–Florence, 1482) *Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino)*, ca. 1430 Polychromed terracotta
Chiesa di Santa Felicita, Florence

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Fra Filippo Lippi (Florence, ca. 1406–Spoleto, 1469)

Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), ca. 1466–69

Tempera on wood panel

Provincia di Firenze, Palazzo Medici Riccardi, Florence

NMWA Educator's Guide for *Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea*

Unknown Artist

Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus from a Falnama (Book of Divination)
Manuscript, ca. 1600

Gouache on cloth

13 x 8 1/3 in.

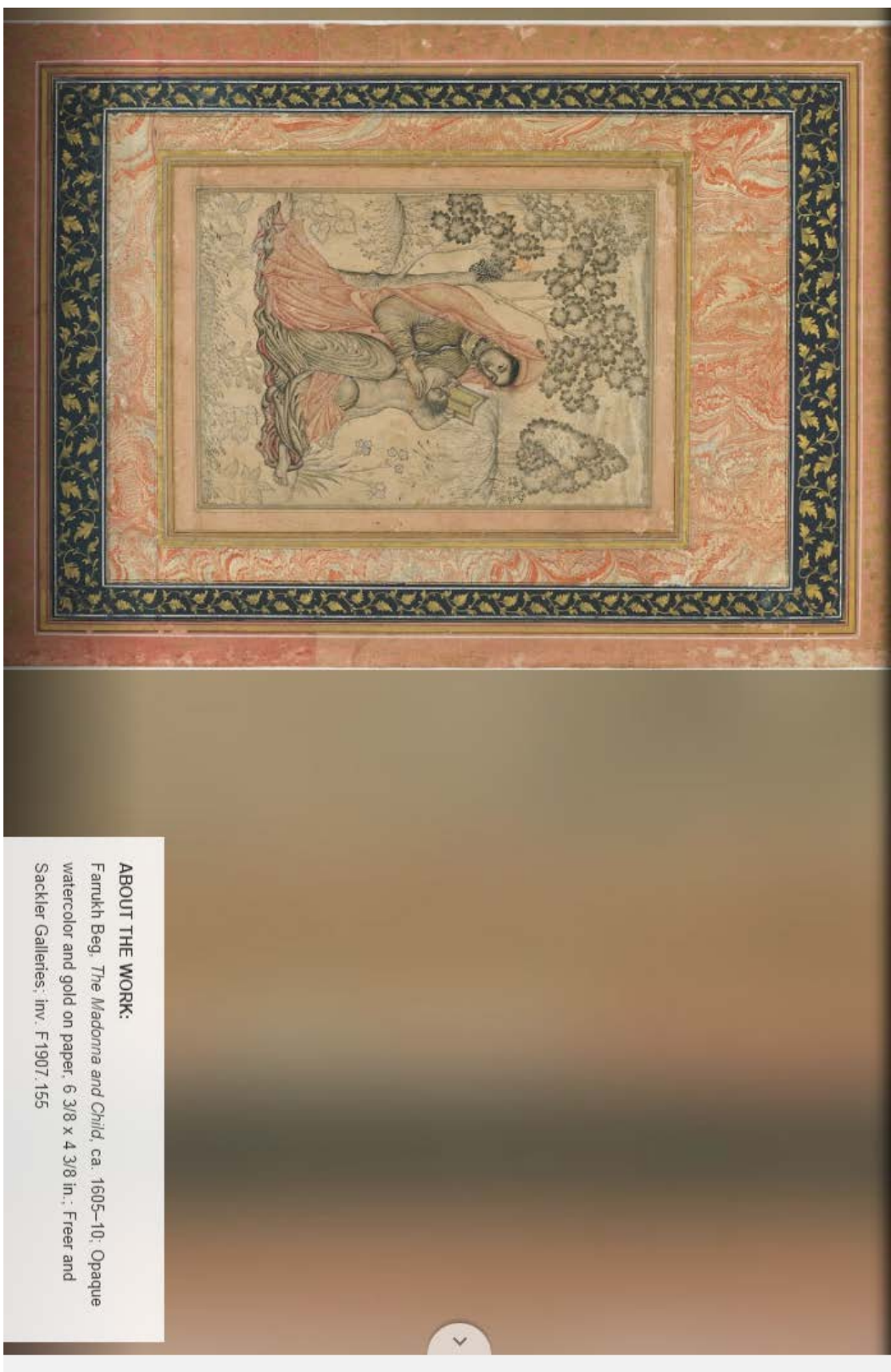
Courtesy of Sam Fogg, London

Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>



ABOUT THE WORK:

Unknown artist. *Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus from a Falnama (Book of Divination) Manuscript, ca. 1600*. Gouache on cloth, 13 x 8 1/3 in.; Courtesy of Sam Fogg, London



Farrukh Beg

The Madonna and Child, ca. 1605–10

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

6 3/8 x 4 3/8 in.

Freer and Sackler Galleries, inv.

F1907.155

Screen shot from: <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>



Elisabetta Sirani (Bologna, 1638–1665)

Virgin and Child, 1663

Oil on canvas

National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C., Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Conservation funds generously provided by the Southern California State Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts; inv. 1986.289

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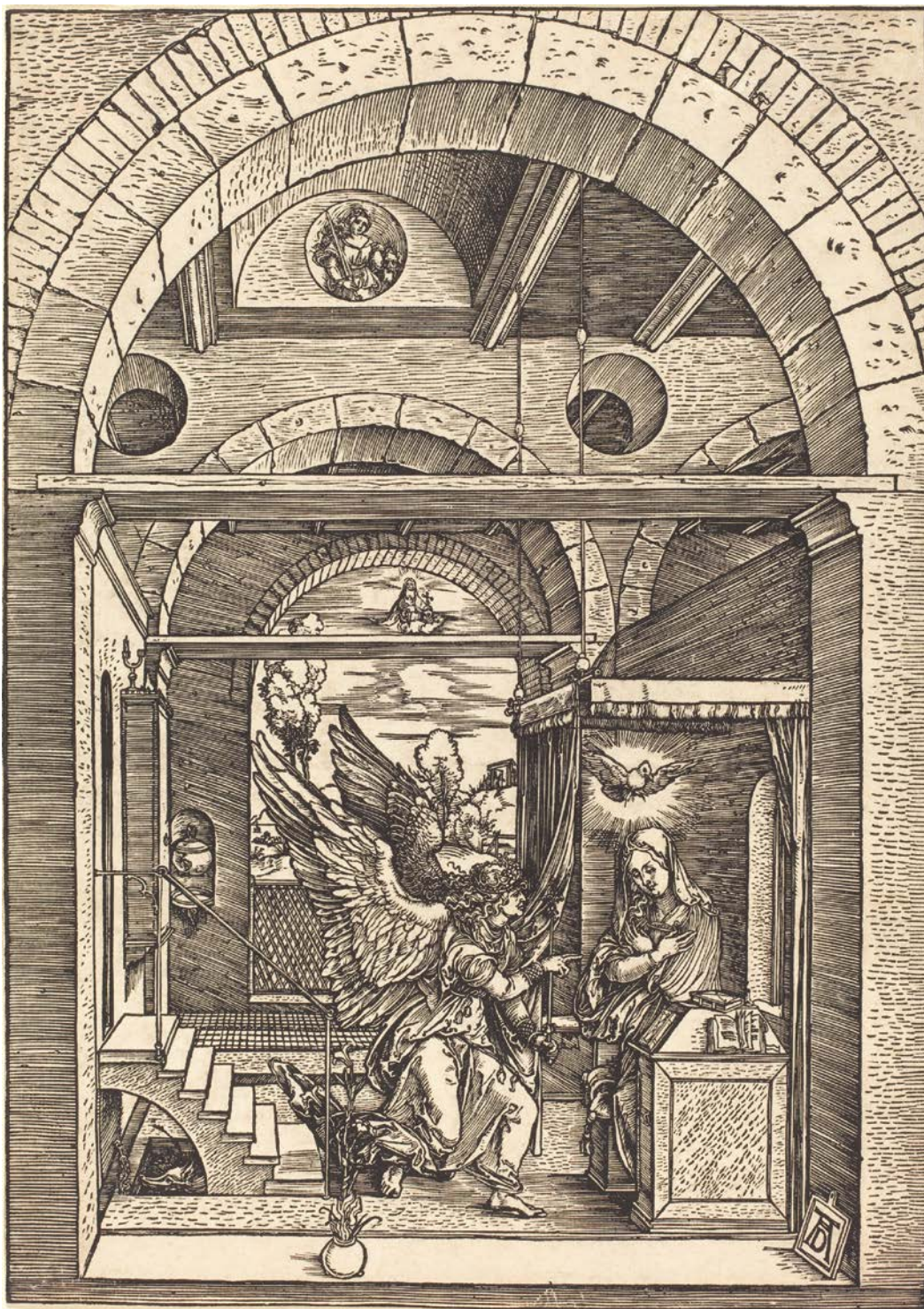
Orsola Maddalena Caccia (Moncalvo, 1596–1676)

Madonna and Child with St. Anne (Madonna col Bambino e Sant'Anna), ca. 1630s

Oil on canvas

Parrocchia Sant'Antonio di Padova, Moncalvo, Asti

NMWA Educator's Guide for *Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea*



Albrecht Dürer (Nuremberg, 1471–1528)

The Annunciation, ca. 1502–04

Woodcut

11 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 8 $\frac{5}{16}$ in. (29.8 x 21.1 cm)

National Gallery of Art Washington, D.C.; Rosenwald Collection, 1943.3.358

NMWA Educator's Guide for *Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea*



Elisabetta Sirani (Bologna, 1638–1665)

The Holy Family with St. Elizabeth and St. John the Baptist, ca. 1650–60

Etching on paper

National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C., Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; inv. 1986.290

NMWA Educator's Guide for *Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea*



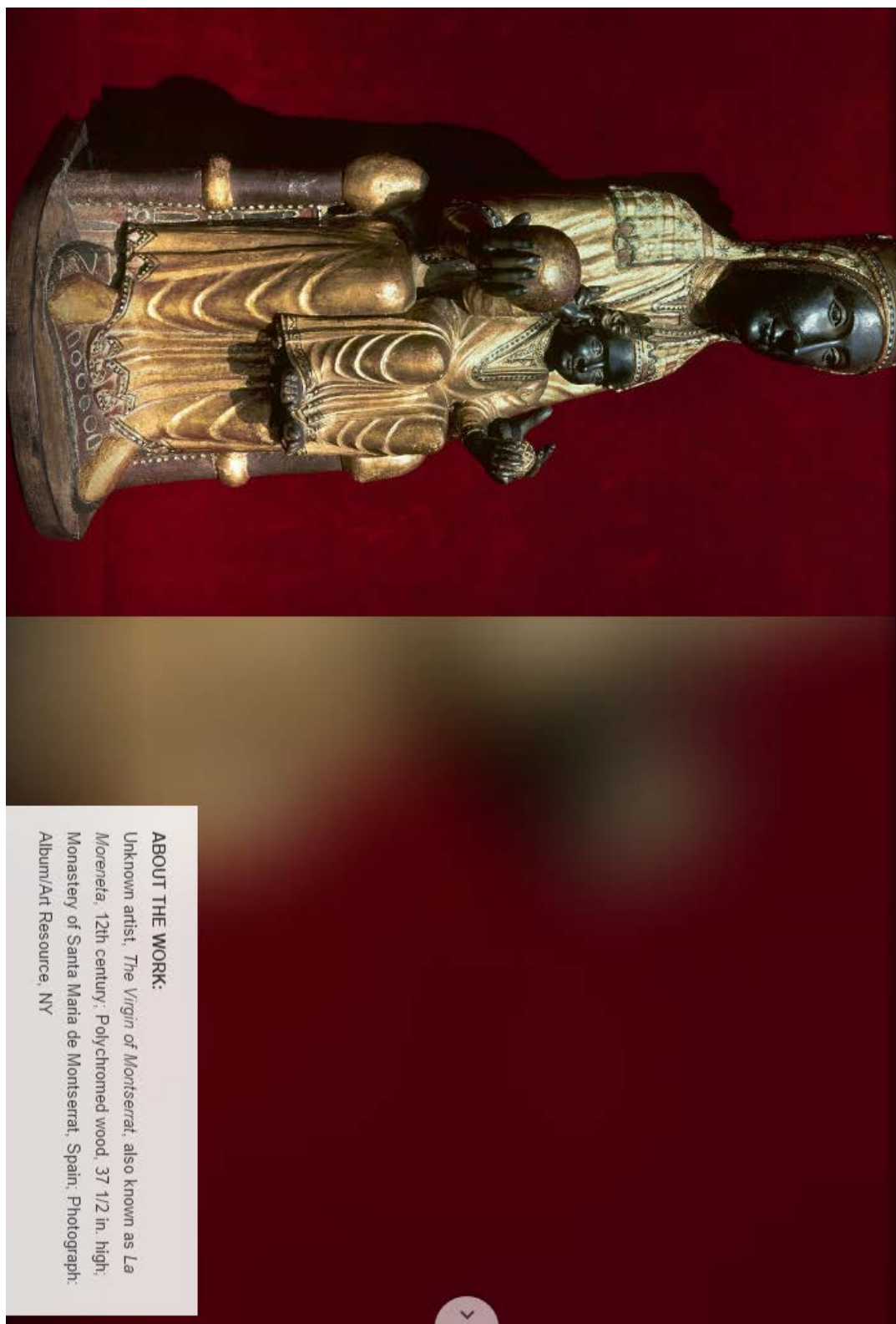
Orsola Maddalena Caccia (Moncalvo, 1596–1676)

Mystical Marriage of the Blessed Osanna Andreasi (Matrimonio Mistico della Beata Osanna Andreasi), 1648

Oil on canvas

Museo Diocesano Francesco Gonzaga, Mantua

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Unknown Artist
The Virgin of Montserrat, also known as *La Moreneta*, 12th century
Polychromed wood
37 1/2 in. high
Monastery of Santa Maria de Montserrat, Spain;
Photograph: Album/Art Resource, NY
Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>

ABOUT THE WORK:

Unknown artist, *The Virgin of Montserrat*, also known as *La Moreneta*, 12th century; Polychromed wood, 37 1/2 in. high; Monastery of Santa Maria de Montserrat, Spain; Photograph: Album/Art Resource, NY



Puccio Capanna (Florence/Assisi, act. ca. 1325–1350)

Madonna and Child with Annunciation and Female Saints (Regina Virginum), ca. 1330

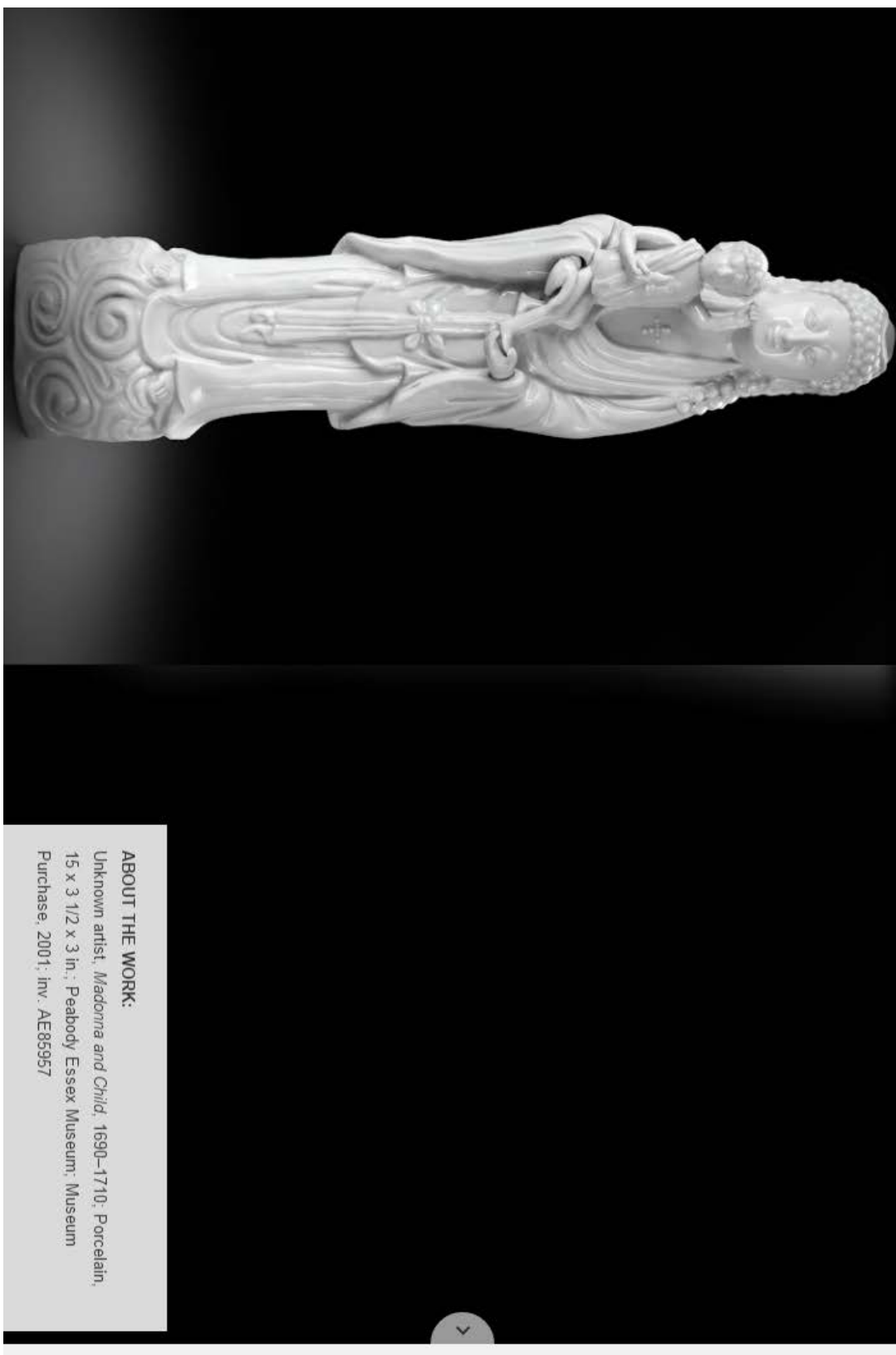
Tempera and gold on wood panel

Vatican Museums, Vatican City; inv. 40170

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Pontormo (Jacopo Carrucci) (Pontormo, near Empoli, 1494–Florence, ca. 1556/57)
Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), 1527
Oil on wood panel
Palazzo Capponi alle Rovinate, Florence



Unknown Artist

Madonna and Child, 1690–1710

Porcelain

15 x 3 1/2 x 3 in.

Peabody Essex Museum; Museum Purchase, 2001; inv. AE85957

Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>

Unknown Artist

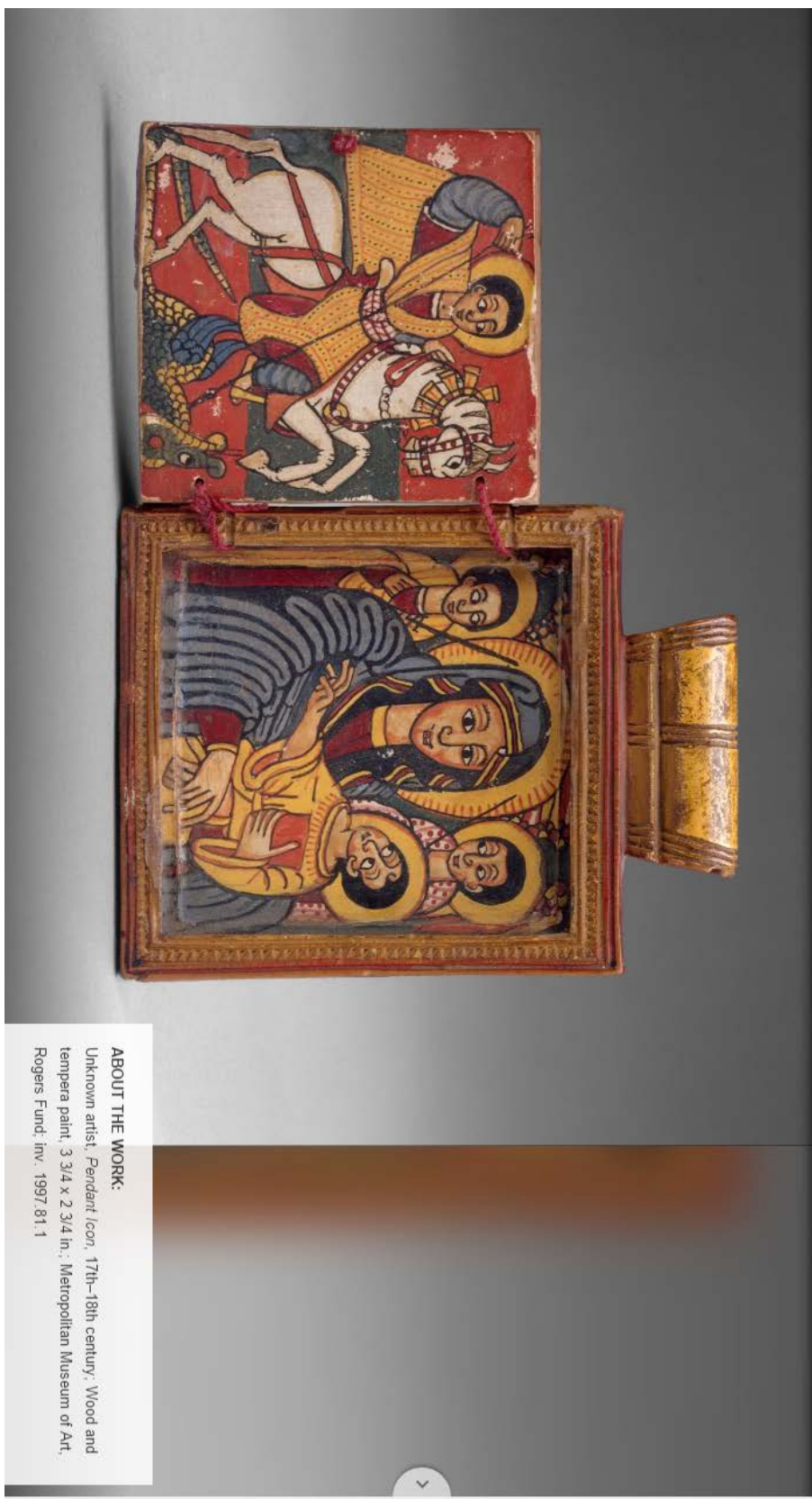
Pendant Icon, 17th–18th century

Wood and tempera paint

3 3/4 x 2 3/4 in.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund; inv. 1997.81.1

Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>



ABOUT THE WORK:

Unknown artist, *Pendant Icon*, 17th–18th century. Wood and tempera paint, 3 3/4 x 2 3/4 in.; Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund; inv. 1997.81.1



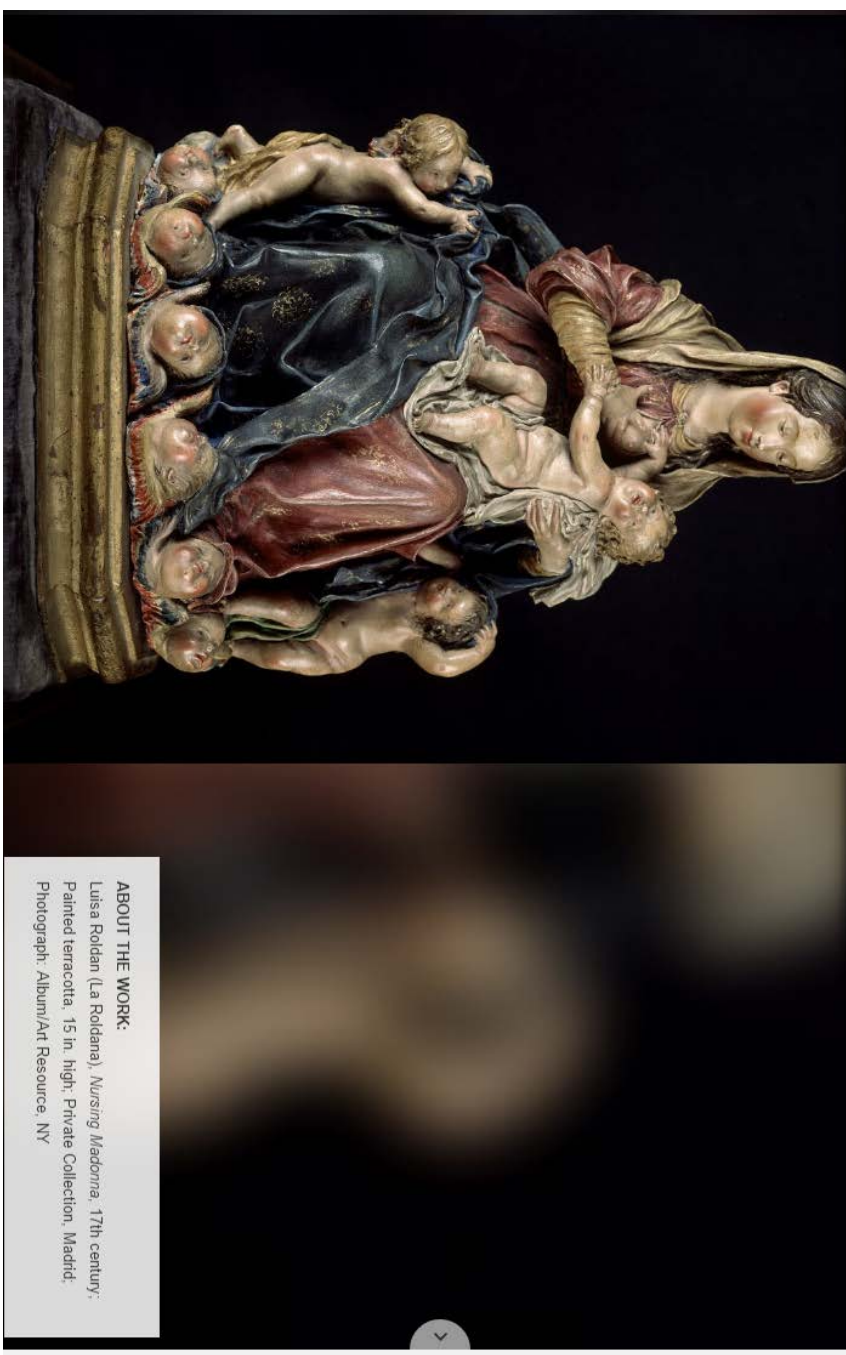
Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (Venice, 1696–Madrid, 1770)

Madonna of the Goldfinch, ca. 1767–70

Oil on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Samuel H. Kress Collection; inv. 1943.4.40

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Luisa Roldán (Seville, 1652–Madrid, 1706)
Nursing Madonna, 17th century
Painted terracotta
15 in. high
Private Collection, Madrid; Photo Credit: Album/Art Resource, NY
Screenshot from <http://nmwa.org/global-icon>

Luisa Roldán (Seville, 1652–Madrid, 1706)

Holy Family and Two Angels with Christ Child Taking First Steps, 17th century

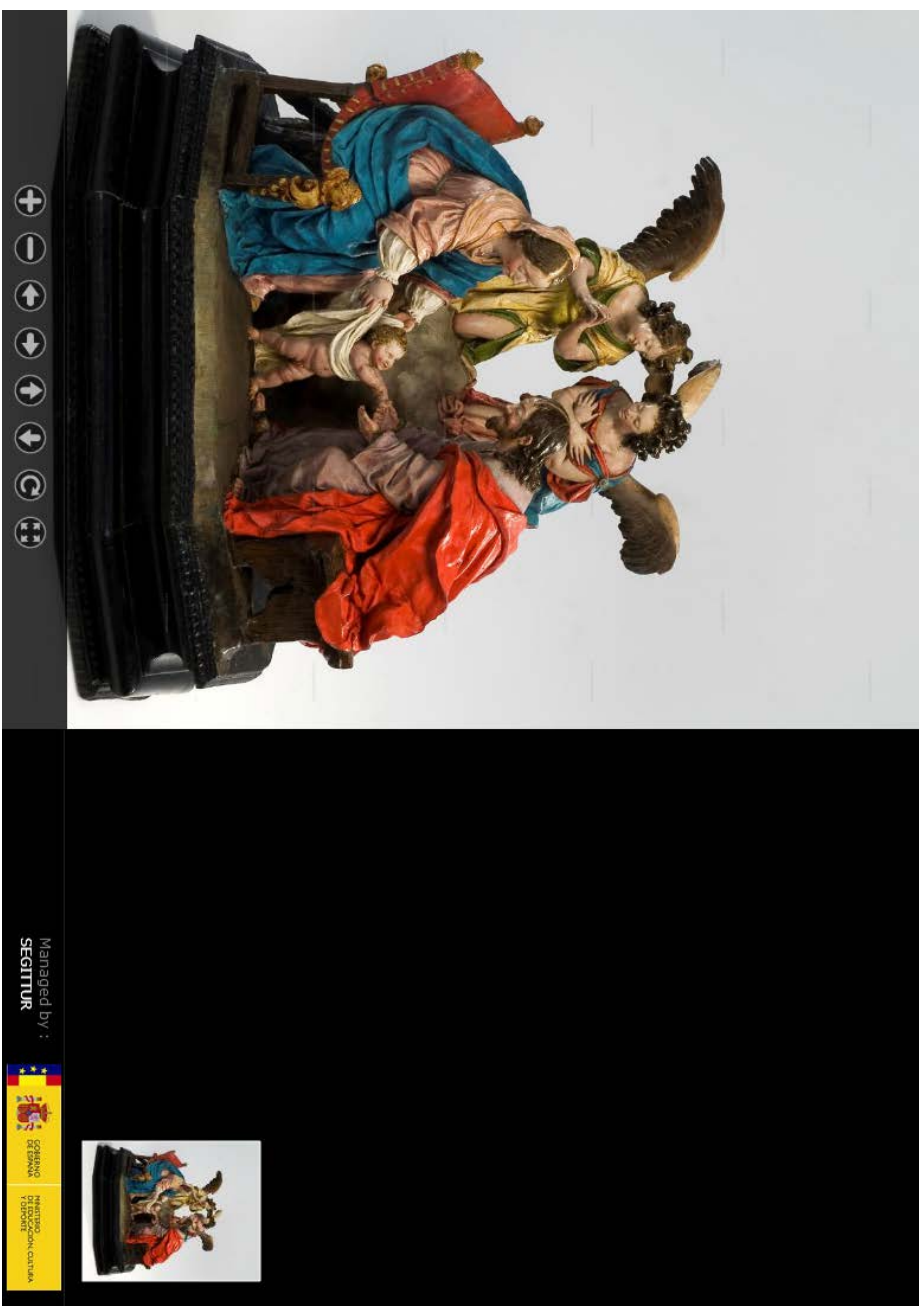
Painted terracotta

Palacio del Infantado/Museo de Bellas Artes, Guadalajara, Spain. (Photo Credit: Album/Art Resource, NY. Image

Reference:orz024395)

Screenshot from

http://www.spainisculture.com/en/obras_de_excelencia/museo_provincial_de_guadalajara/los_primeros_pasos_de_jesus.html





Unknown Artist, Rhenish School (Germany, 14th century)
Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), 14th century
Boxwood

Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence; inv. C 1351

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Benedetto da Maiano (Florence, 1442–1497) and Bernardo di Stefano Rosselli (Florence, ca. 1450–1526)

Madonna and Child Giving Blessing (Madonna col Bambino Benedicente), ca. 1490–1500

Polychromed terracotta

Grimaldi Fava Collection

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