Renaissance Art: Focus on the Individual

Sculptors, artists, and architects combined classical ideas with the humanists idea of emphasis on the individual (human).

Florentine sculptor
Donatello’s David

Michelangelo’s *David* exemplifies the idealistic human body and the Renaissance focus on the individual.

Medieval Example:

Wernher

*Triptych*

900-1000 AD
Ivory
18.4cm x 16.8cm
British Museum, London
Realism & Expression

First nudes since classical times.

Expulsion from the Garden
Masaccio, 1427

Medieval Example:

Giotto

Ognissanti Madonna

1310
Tempera on panel
325 cm × 204 cm
Uffizi Gallery, Florence
The first major revival of classicism occurred during the Renaissance.

**Classicism**

St. Peter’s Basilica  
(Vatican)  
Consecrated 1626  
Michelangelo  
Architect

**Medieval Example:**

Cathedral of Notre Dame  
(Paris)  
Completed 1345  
*Multiple Architects*
**Detail and Perspective**

The art of Medieval Europe rarely had detailed backgrounds but during the Renaissance people became more interested in the world around them, landscapes and buildings began to show up in paintings.

To a three-dimensional world onto the two-dimensional surface of a painting, Renaissance painters used a technique known as perspective, the idea that converging lines meet at a single vanishing point and all shapes get smaller in all directions with increasing distance from the eye.

**Use of Light and Shadowing**

**Chiaroscuro**

The use of strong contrasts between light and dark

**Sfumato**

Sfumato means “to tone down” or “to evaporate like smoke.”

The most prominent practitioner of sfumato was Leonardo da Vinci, who described sfumato as “without lines or borders, in the manner of smoke or beyond the focus plane.”
Renaissance Art in Northern Europe

Although Italian influence was strong, it should not be considered as merely an addition to Italian Renaissance art.

**Differences:**

**Italian Renaissance:**
change was inspired by humanism
wealthy merchant class were patrons of artists

**Northern Renaissance:**
change was driven by religious reform
kings & princes were patrons of artists

**Characteristics of Northern Renaissance Art**

realism & naturalism
focused on peasant life
details of domestic interiors
skilled in portraiture

Jan Van Eyck, *Rolin Madonna*, c. 1435, Flemish, Northern Renaissance.