**I. Italian Renaissance Art**

**A. Patronage**

1. In addition to religious art, artists emphasized individuals and everyday life, **secular** subjects that were now deemed appropriate by elites who commissioned them.

2. **Florence was the leader** in Renaissance art in the 1400s.
   a. Patronage for the arts came from wealthy merchant-families (such as the Medici) who commissioned countless works from the great artists.
      - In essence, the wealth of Florence was mirrored by the superb artistic output of the Renaissance.
      - A good example is Donatello’s *David* (in bronze) which stood in the Medici courtyard during the wedding of Lorenzo de Medici.
      - Patrons wished to display their wealth and prestige to assert their power over society.
      - In Milan, the Sforza’s commissioned such works as Leonardo’s *The Last Supper*.
   b. Patronage also came from local churches who saw Renaissance art as a means of glorifying God. Some notable examples include:
      - Brunelleschi’s *Il Duomo* on the Florence cathedral
      - Ghiberti’s two sets of doors were created for the baptistery opposite *Il Duomo*
      - Michelangelo call them “**Gates of Paradise**”
      - Michelangelo’s *David* was also commissioned for the cathedral (but was too heavy and placed elsewhere)

3. Rome became the center of Renaissance art in the 1500s
   a. With the decline of Florence in the late-15th century (late-1400s), Renaissance dominance shifted to Rome.
   b. Pope Alexander VI (r. 1492-1503): He was one of the most notorious of the Renaissance popes and spent huge sums on art patronage
   c. A few of the notable works commissioned by the Church in this period include
      - Michelangelo’s dome atop St. Peter’s Cathedral, his paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, and the sculpture *Pieta* that is located within the cathedral
      - Raphael’s *The School of Athens* (a fresco painting inside the papal apartments)

**B. New artistic techniques**

1. Painting
   a. **geometric perspective**: 3-D effects on a two-dimensional surface
      - Medieval works, in contrast, looked flat and two-dimensional.
   b. **chiaroscuro**: use of dark and light colors to create the illusion of depth
c. Faces of subjects expressed unique individual characteristics (embodying the Renaissance ideal of "individualism").
   - More emotion was shown on human faces.
   - In contrast, medieval paintings tended to be more generic in their portrayal of human faces.

d. *sfumato* was developed by Leonardo—a “smoky effect” technique of blurring or softening sharp outlines

2. **Sculpture**
   a. Medieval sculpture often appeared on buildings and tombs. Highly detailed, did not glorify the human body.
      - They were relief sculptures protruding from a surface.
   b. Renaissance sculpture was often free-standing, designed to be seen “in the round.”
      - Renaissance sculptors were heavily influenced by ancient Greek and Roman statuary.
   c. Many sculptures glorified/idealized the human body and many portrayed nude figures (like works in ancient Greece and Rome “Greco-Roman”).
   d. Like Renaissance painting, many Renaissance sculptures glorified the individual.

3. **Architecture**
   a. The Gothic style of architecture during the Middle Ages was highly-ornamented with pointed arches, spires, flying buttresses, and a grand scale.
      - Meant to call attention upward toward God
   b. In contrast, Renaissance architecture utilized ancient Greco-Roman forms such as Greek temple architecture (w/triangular pediments), Greek columns, Roman arches and domes (e.g. the Pantheon in Rome).
   c. emphasized simplicity, symmetry and balance.

C. **Florentine Renaissance Artists**
   1. Artists are elevated from being seen as “workmen” during the Middle Ages to geniuses during the Renaissance.
      a. Artist now sign their work!
   2. **Filippo Brunelleschi** (1377-1446)
      a. *Il Duomo* (1420-34) atop the Florence Cathedral is his masterpiece; it was the largest dome in Europe at the time of its construction
      b. He is considered the “father” of linear perspective (although Alberti wrote the first treatise on the subject).
   3. Leon Battista **Alberti** (1404-1472)
      a. He was an architect of several famous cathedrals; he used Greek and Roman forms.
      b. He wrote the first treatise on linear perspective although Brunelleschi is credited with inventing it.
   4. Lorenzo **Ghiberti** (1378-1455) – sculptor
      a. He won a famous contest in 1403 against Brunelleschi that earned him the commission to sculpt the bronze doors for the Florentine baptistery.
      b. masterpiece of sculpture.
         - Michelangelo called these the “gates of paradise.”
5. **Donatello** (1386-1466) – sculptor
   a. bronze statue of *David* (1409) was the first since antiquity.
   b. first Renaissance artist to utilize a nude figure in sculpture.

6. **Botticelli** (1444-1510) – painter: *Birth of Venus* (c. 1486)
   a. The painting is a good example of humanism as the subject is Venus, the Roman goddess of love.
   b. Venus stands *contrapposto*, with more weight on one leg than the other. This is also humanistic as *contrapposto* was used frequently by ancient Greek and Roman sculptors.

D. **“High Renaissance”**: centered mostly in Rome (16th century)
   1. The worldly “Renaissance Popes”—Alexander VI, Julius II and Leo X—provided tremendous patronage to the arts.
   2. Characteristics: classical balance, harmony, restraint

3. **Leonardo da Vinci** (1452-1519)
   a. He is often seen as the quintessential “Renaissance Man.”
      • Painter, sculptor, architect, engineer, writer, scientist
   b. **Mona Lisa** (1503-1507)
      • It is considered one of the great masterpieces in all of art history (secular)
      • Leonardo developed the technique of *sfumato*, a haze that softens the edges of objects in the painting.
   c. **The Last Supper** (1498) – fresco (paint on wet plaster)

4. **Raphael** (Santi) (1483-1520) – painter
   a. **School of Athens** (1511) perfect example of humanism.
      • Greco-Roman architecture is prominent.
      • Plato and Aristotle are in the center of the painting.
      • Secular in that numerous non-Christian thinkers, scientists, and mathematicians are incl in the work.

5. **Michelangelo** (Buonarroti) (1475-1564)
   a. Painting: ceiling of the Sistine Chapel (1508-1512)
      • Commissioned by Pope Julius II
   b. Sculpture:
      • **David** (1501-04): Humanistic marble sculpture—glorifies the human body; *contrapposto* stance; facial features are individualistic and emotional
      • **Pietà** (1499): Mary holds the limp body of Christ, located in the Vatican, idealized figures.
   c. Architecture: He designed the enormous dome atop **St. Peter’s Basilica** in the Vatican (still the largest dome in present-day Europe).

E. **Mannerism** (late 16th to early 17th century)
   1. Reaction to simplicity and symmetry of the High Renaissance
   2. Made room for the strange and abnormal
   3. More reflective of the artist’s perceptions and feelings

4. **El Greco** (1541 – 1614) is the best example
   a. born in Greece, moved to Venice, later life in Spain
   b. elongated (strays from naturalism) figures, extended necks, fingers etc.
   c. influential on modern art movements such as post-impressionism and cubism.