

ART AND ANATOMY IN THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

Carlos A. Camargo, M.D.

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There were tremendous changes in the History of Art between the time of Giotto in the early 1300s and the mature works of the giants of the Italian Renaissance a couple of centuries later. An important factor in this change was the collaboration of artists and physicians in Florence, at a time when anatomical dissections of cadavers, not done in Europe since the time of ancient Greece, were starting again in Northern Italian Universities.

THE FLORENTINE REPUBLIC HAD HAD SEVEN MAJOR GUILDS:

The Arte di Calimala (guild of workers in wool)

The Arte della Lana (guild of wool merchants)

The Arte dei Giudici e Notai (guild of judges and notaries)

The Arte del Cambio (guild of bankers)

The Arte della Seta (guild of silk weavers)

The Arte dei Medici e Speziali (guild of physicians and pharmacists)

The Arte dei Vaiai e Pellicciai (guild of furriers)

Interestingly enough, the painters became members of "Medici e Speziali", in 1314, probably because pigments used by artists and substances used by the apothecaries were often similar or obtained from similar sources. Further-more, the patron Saint for both physicians and painters was St. Luke, who according to tradition was both painter and physician.

A FEW QUOTES:

Leon Battista Alberti (1404-72):

"Who would dare claim to be a shipbuilder, if he did not know how many parts there are in a ship, how one ship differs from another, and how the parts of any construction fit together? Yet how many sculptors...have observed and properly understood the structure of any limb? Everybody should have learned the art he professes" (In De statua) And in De Pictura: "...when painting living creatures, first sketch the bones, for, as they bend very little indeed, they always occupy a certain determined position. Then add the sinews and muscles. And finally clothe the bones and muscles with flesh and skin..."

Lorenzo Ghiberti in Commentary I:

"It is necessary (for the artist) to have seen anatomy ('avere veduto notomia') in order that the sculptor wanting to compose the statua virile knows how many bones are in the human body and in a like manner know all the muscles and all the nerves and connections in the body of man."

Benvenuto Cellini (1500-71):

In 'Sopra i pincipii e'l modo d'imparare l'arte del disegno' gives a guarantee: "...Once you have put well to mind a bone structure, you can never make a figure, either naked or dressed, with errors; and that is surely a great accomplishment. I am not saying that you can be sure, because of that to make your figures with more or less grace; but only that it may suffice you to make them with no errors, and of this I assure you."

ARTISTS WHOSE WORK WILL BE PRESENTED DURING THE TALK, IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE:

- Giotto di Bondoni (c.1267-1337)
- Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598-1680)
- Masaccio (Tommaso di Ser Giovanni di Mone) (1401-28)
- Antonio Pollaiuolo (c.1432-98)
- Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455)
- Donatello (Donato di Niccolo) (1386?-1466)
- Fra Angelico (Guido di Pietro) (c. 1395-1455)
- Luca Signorelli (c.1440/50-1523)
- Piero della Francesca (1415-92)
- Andrea Mantegna (1430/1-1506)
- Sandro Botticelli (Alessandro di Mariano Filipepi) (1444/5-1510)
- Alessandro Allori (1535-1607)
- Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio) (1483-1520)
- Andrea del Verrocchio (Andrea di Cione) (c. 1435-88)
- Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)
- Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564)