

Meet the Masters
February Program

Mary Cassatt "The Child's Bath"
Leonardo Da Vinci "Ginevra De' Benci"

About the Artist: (See the following pages.)

About the Artwork:

"The Child's Bath" by **Mary Cassatt** was painted in 1893. This is one of Cassatt's most famous works, it is typical of her art due to its emphasis on the figure and the common theme of woman and child. This was painted over one hundred years ago, when homes did not have running water and separate rooms for bathing. Unlike Renaissance painters who tried to create an illusion of reality and depth by using scientific perspective, Cassatt's composition tilts toward us as if we were looking down from above. Our attention is drawn to the tenderness displayed between the woman and her child. The stripes of the woman's dress and the diamond patterns in the carpet provide an almost flat background on which the figures appear to be three dimensional. Both figures are totally absorbed in the bathing ritual.

"Ginevra De' Benci" by **Leonardo Da Vinci** was painted around 1474. During the time of Leonardo it was customary for young women to have their portraits painted just before their weddings. This was probably Ginevra's wedding portrait as she was married in 1474 at the age of seventeen.

In this portrait of Ginevra De' Benci the light floods her face and hair to reveal a glowing the tiny curls of her hair and the rounded shape of her face. The soft fabric of her clothing can be seen in the lower part of the painting. The spiky plant is juniper serves as her emblem because in Italian it sounds like her name.

The lower part of the painting appears to have been cut off from the bottom. This may have contained the hands, in a pose perhaps similar to the "Mona Lisa." The odd, square shape of the painting further attests to the theory that it had been cut off. There is another clue on the back of the painting itself. A wreath has been painted on the reverse side of the canvas, and its lower third is cut away.

Notice the background of the painting, which is veiled in a thin mist, created by thin glazes of oil paint. Leonardo became the most celebrated in the world in his use of this painting technique. The effect is called "sfumato" (literally, "vaporized").

Topics for Discussion:

1. Can you find differences in these two paintings?
2. Can you find similarities in these two paintings?
3. Which painting do you like best? Why?
4. Where do you think these women were when the artists painted them?
5. Which painting contains more color? What colors can you find?
6. Which painting contains more patterns in the composition?

Hands-on Art Activity:

Make a People Collage

Teacher preparation: Ask students to bring old magazines to school which will be cut. Look for magazines which contain people's faces. (See attached note to copy and distribute)

Materials: Magazines that can be cut-up
Stiff paper or colored construction paper
Scissors
Glue
Crayons or oil pastels

Directions:

1. Look through magazines and find two or three pictures of people.
2. Cut out the faces and place on background paper, but do not glue in place.
3. Think about where the people you have chosen will be placed and what they will be doing.
4. Glue the faces or figures onto the paper.
5. Draw bodies for the people, and the background, based on the place or activity you've chosen.
6. Use all of the paper and fill in the background.
7. Sign your name on the front when complete.

Dear 3rd grade student,

In preparation for our Meet the Masters session scheduled on _____
we will need you to bring in 2 – 3 old magazines which contain **people's faces**.

We will be making a "People Collage".

Please bring the magazines to school by _____

Thank-you,

Your Meet the Masters Volunteers

Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519)

Leonardo Da Vinci was born in the village of Vinci, near Florence, Italy on April 15, 1452. ("Da Vinci" means "from Vinci"). When Leonardo was young teenager he moved to Florence to be with his father. Florence was famous as a wealthy city were, during the fifteenth century, the city's achievements in art and architecture were famous the world over.

When Leonardo moved to Florence he became an apprentice to the famous painter and sculptor, Verrochio. As a young apprentice he learned everything from grinding pigments and making brushes to painting altarpieces and carving sculptures. The typical apprenticeship lasted about thirteen years. Leonardo's genius was fully evident when he painted a small but important part of a work attributed to Verrochio. He surpassed the master in the rendering and lifelike quality of his painting..

Leonardo lived during the time of the "Renaissance" which means "rebirth". This was a time of great achievements in art, science and literature. For his part in all this creative activity, Leonardo invented a new style of Renaissance painting that was grander and much more lifelike than anything the world had ever seen.

During his lifetime Leonardo produced a small number of finished painting, however his drawings and many scientific inventions accounted for the work of a genius. His most famous paintings are "The Last Supper", "Ginevra de' Benci" , "The Annunciation" and " Mona Lisa."

Mary Cassatt (1845-1926)

Mary Cassatt was born on May 22, 1844, in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, which is now a part of Pittsburgh. She was raised in a wealthy family that traveled to Europe when Cassatt was a child. She was fortunate to live in Paris, Heidelberg and Darmstadt as a young child. She learned to speak French and German during the four years spent in Europe.

Cassatt's exposure to the rich culture and art heritage made an impact on her decision to pursue a career as an artist. At the age of 16 she was enrolled in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia. She was frustrated by the domineering attitude of the male instructors. She decided that she must study in Europe to become an artist, so moved to Paris in 1866. This was the Victorian era, a time when young women did not do such things. Cassatt moved despite the disapproval of her friends and family. While in the early years in Paris she mainly copied old master works at the Louvre. She left Paris to take private lessons in Italy and Spain and in 1871 she came to Chicago to try and sell some of her paintings. She also studied the paintings that were exhibited at the Paris World's Fair of 1867. In the spring of 1872, she submitted a painting to the Paris Salon, and was accepted.

The acceptance of her painting at the Paris Salon was the beginning of a long and successful career for Cassatt. She became a protégé of Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Edouard Manet, and Gustave Courbet. This was the core of artists whose "Impressionist" art changed forever the way that the world views art and artists.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed many profound changes in the art world. The early developments in photography made the artists turn toward art for reasons other than to record history in strictly, "approved" realistic portrayal of subjects. Mary Cassatt had a major influence on the way that women were viewed as both artists and professionals.

Cassatt concentrated on scenes from everyday life. She worked in oil paints, pastels and prints. She is most famous for her depictions of mothers and children going about the day to day activities that were strictly the world of women. The stages of women's lives from birth, to raising children to old age are portrayed with great sensitivity by Cassatt. She never married and thus never had children, but seemed to understand the mother and child connection.