



The J. Paul Getty Museum

Captured Emotions: Baroque Painting in Bologna, 1575–1725

December 16, 2008 to May 3, 2009

The J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center

This exhibition tells the extraordinary story of a small group of artists who changed the course of art history. In the decades after the deaths of the great Renaissance masters, such as Raphael and Michelangelo, the art of painting was thought to have gone into steep decline. But then, in the late sixteenth century, the Carracci family of painters from Bologna burst onto the scene with tremendous energy and vitality, raising art to new heights. Their heroic achievement set standards that were to remain authoritative for more than two hundred years. Here a selection of key works by the Carracci and several generations of their pupils and followers brings this artistic triumph to life. For them, the visible world became their principal source of inspiration, and nature was their teacher. Painting was about to enter a new era of creativity and lavish patronage, resulting in the glories of the Baroque age.

This exhibition has been co-organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden.

The Carracci Family

Four hundred years ago the Carracci family of painters was as famous as Raphael or Caravaggio. This band of creative rebels from Bologna consisted of two brothers, Annibale and Agostino, and their slightly older cousin Ludovico. They challenged the artistic establishment of their day and revolutionized the art of painting. The academy they established in their workshop in Bologna in 1582 exercised an enormous influence on subsequent painters. It attracted the most talented artists of the next generation, including Guido Reni, Domenichino, and Francesco Albani (all represented in this exhibition). The Carracci and their students set about remaking their art through the observation and mastery of nature. They drew tirelessly from the live model to improve their skill in representing the human body, both in the studio and on the streets of Bologna, where they observed everyday life. The other foundation of the Carracci reform was intensive study and analysis of successful works by the great Renaissance painters, especially Raphael.



Madonna Enthroned with Saint Matthew

Annibale Carracci

1588

Italian, 1560–1609

Oil on canvas

151 3/16 x 100 3/8 in. (384 x 255 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photographers: Estel/Klut

This masterpiece of Annibale Carracci's early period epitomizes his unprecedented skills: the compelling and illusionistic depiction of the human body, of materials and textures, and of light and shade.

Annibale made his figures spring to life in three dimensions by covering the discernible bone and muscle with a veil of soft flesh, as can be seen in the adolescent angel seated at the bottom, the sun-reddened chest of Saint John the Baptist at right, and the rosy baby skin and plump belly of the Infant Christ.

The artist created a tour de force of textures, including the yellow satin over the seated angel's legs, the gold brocade cloth of honor behind the Virgin, the ragged brown sackcloth habit worn by Saint Francis, and the soft animal skin worn by Saint John the Baptist, its rough side turned inward. The colors appear, as in nature, at full intensity in direct light while gradually darkening into the shadows.



Saint Sebastian

[Annibale Carracci](#)

About 1583–84

Italian, 1560–1609

Oil on canvas

74 7/16 x 42 1/8 in. (189 x 107 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Annibale's canvas presents a harrowing depiction of Saint Sebastian. Although he survived being shot with arrows, he was later clubbed to death, and his body was thrown into the Cloaca Maxima, Rome's main sewer.

Tied to a broken column in a panoramic landscape, Sebastian is bent forward as if incapable of standing upright in this restricted space. His faded red cloak and the crossbow (from which was shot the arrow to his midsection) form a still life at lower left. Sebastian casts a pallid face and red-rimmed eyes directly outward. The convincing naturalism of his body is the result of studies made from life as well as an intimate knowledge of the artistic traditions of Renaissance art; the result is a sense of unnerving realism.



Saint Sebastian Thrown into the Cloaca Maxima

[Lodovico Carracci](#)

1612

Italian, 1555–1619

Oil on canvas

65 3/4 x 91 3/4 in. (167 x 233 cm)

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Maffeo Barberini, who later became Pope Urban VIII, commissioned this rare depiction of an episode from Saint Sebastian's martyrdom, which followed his attempted execution with arrows. It was intended to decorate the chapel in the new Roman church of Sant'Andrea della Valle constructed above the site of Sebastian's disposal in the Cloaca Maxima (the ancient Roman sewer).

The persuasive naturalism of Ludovico's rendering of the dead youth and of the brutal force of the Roman soldiers paired with the somber, nocturnal colors made Barberini reconsider placing the painting in a chapel. Deemed unsuitable for contemplative prayers, the picture entered the Barberini family's private collection.

Portraiture

The skill of a great portraitist lies in the ability to depict something beyond a recognizable likeness—beyond physical appearance—to convey the sitter's life and character on canvas. The portraits presented here range from the highest echelons of the papal court at Rome to the artists' friends and family, from prestigious commissions to pictures painted out of pure affection. These examples were created by four of the greatest Bolognese artists—Annibale Carracci; his brother, Agostino; Guido Reni; and Guercino. None of them specialized in portraits, yet they possessed the gift of imbuing their works with an acute psychological insight and arresting authenticity that other painters of their day could rarely match. The young Annibale Carracci's skill at portraiture came in handy when he served as his own police sketch artist: he was so successful at recording the faces of some thieves who had attempted to rob him and his father that the men were soon caught and punished.



Portrait of a Boy (Possibly Antonio Carracci)

Agostino Carracci

About 1588–89

Italian, 1557–1602

Oil on canvas

25 9/16 x 19 1/8 in. (65 x 48.5 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

The identity of this sitter is not certain. He may be Antonio Carracci (1582–1618), Agostino's illegitimate son, who was conceived while on a trip to Venice. As with his brother's later *Portrait of the Lute Player Giulio Mascheroni*, the young sitter is presented half-length, close to the picture plane within an indeterminate dark space. He toys with a pair of cherries, his hands resting against a table on which a lute rests facedown. The somewhat detached observation of the sitter (even as he directly engages the viewer) reveals a picture heavily dependent on the more static traditions of earlier portraits.



Portrait of the Lute Player Giulio Mascheroni

Annibale Carracci

About 1593–94

Italian, 1560–1609

Oil on canvas

30 5/16 x 25 3/16 in. (77 x 64 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photographer: H.-P. Klut

Executed just before Annibale's departure from Bologna for Rome in the fall of 1594, this portrait depicts a family friend of the Carracci. Mascheroni is elegantly placed within the picture plane; the soberly dressed lute player has been caught at practice, perhaps even writing a score (a quill pen and sheet of music rest on the table in the foreground). Interrupted, Mascheroni acknowledges the viewer's presence with an attentive but imperious gaze. As spontaneous as the portrait appears, there are at least two known drawings made in the course of its preparation. Capturing the man's face seems to have come naturally and quickly to Annibale; transforming the drawings into a formal painting was considerably more time-consuming.



Portrait of Pope Gregory XV Ludovisi

Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri)

About 1622–23

Italian, 1591–1666

Oil on canvas

52 1/2 x 38 1/2 in. (133.4 x 97.8 cm)

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Cardinal Alessandro Ludovisi (1554–1623) was named archbishop of Bologna in 1612 and became Pope Gregory XV on February 9, 1621. The new pope brought to Rome a number of artists from Bologna to assist him in artistically defining his pontificate, including his friend Guercino. This portrait was painted toward the end of the pope's brief reign (he died July 8, 1623). Set centrally and high within the picture plane by the oblique placement of the covered table, Gregory seems to have been interrupted from his reading. The artist's psychological investigation of Gregory's state of mind presents an image of the pope that is at once relentless, personal, and overtly fragile. As such, it departs from previous official portraiture and heralds a new direction in realistically depicting not only the pope's physical appearance and the accoutrements that define his position, but also his interior mental life.



Portrait of Cardinal Roberto Ubaldino

Guido Reni

Probably 1625

Italian, 1575–1642

Oil on canvas

77 1/2 x 58 3/4 in. (196.9 x 149.2 cm)

Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Gift of the Ahmanson Foundation, M.83.109

Photo © 2008 Museum Associates/LACMA

In 1623 Cardinal Ubaldino (1581–1635) was made papal legate of Bologna by Pope Gregory XV (whose portrait hangs nearby). This appointment made him the most important religious and political leader in Bologna. The Papal States, unlike other parts of Italy, fell under the authority of the papacy. Following an accepted tradition of state portraiture, Reni presented the sitter seated, holding a letter addressed to him, leaving no doubt about his identity. Reni placed Ubaldino before a purple cloth of honor next to a velvet-covered table at which he has been writing (note the letter and quill pen in the inkwell). Reni relieved the claustrophobia by opening an arcade to the left, leading to an open garden landscape. Within the clear, pure colors and their creamy application, Reni insinuated an image of a man of power able to transcend the magnificence of his costume.

The Ideal versus the Real

Should painters represent objects exactly as they appear, or should they aim to enhance the natural world in order to depict timeless perfection and ideal beauty? These two opposing views profoundly marked the artistic world of seventeenth-century Italy. Giovanni Lanfranco's two canvases represent the direction known as naturalism, the cultivation of convincing and illusionistic visual effects that correspond as closely as possible to the experience of the viewer. The goal of copying nature faithfully, no matter whether it seems ugly or beautiful, is exemplified by the exhaustion in the face of the old man carrying bunches of grapes in *Moses and the Messengers from Canaan*. Works such as Francesco Albani's *Galatea in Her Shell Wagon* and Guido Reni's *Bacchus and Ariadne* are emblematic of classicism, which rested on two premises: that the classical art of ancient Greece and Rome (plus the High Renaissance) set the standard for all future achievement, and that the representation of the real world can be improved by eliminating everything irregular, transitory, and inconsequential—creating an idealized portrayal of nature not as it is, but as it should be.



The Genius of Fame

[Annibale Carracci](#)

About 1588–89

Italian, 1560–1609

Oil on canvas

68 1/2 x 44 15/16 in. (174 x 114.1 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Annibale here transformed the abstract concept of fame into a highly appealing young man propelled heavenward by a flight of cherubs. Crowned with a laurel wreath, the winged genius (or spirit of poetry) is endowed with the features of a classical youth, calling to mind Apollo, the Greek god of poetry and the arts. This idealized young man alludes to the multiple forms of earthly fame that only poetry can render eternal. The crown in his hand symbolizes earthly authority, while the two wreaths around his arm, made of grass and oak leaves, refer to military honors.



The Vision of Saint Ignatius of Loyola

[Domenichino \(Domenico Zampieri\)](#)

1622

Italian, 1581–1641

Oil on canvas

65 3/8 x 38 5/8 in. (166.1 x 98.1 cm)

Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Gift of the Ahmanson Foundation, M.89.59

Photo © 2008 Museum Associates/LACMA

This painting describes the moment of transforming vision that Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), the author of the *Spiritual Exercises*, experienced outside a small chapel in the village of La Storta, where he stopped for prayers on his way to Rome in 1537. The apparition of Christ with a cross attended by God the Father was a propitious sign that confirmed Saint Ignatius's will to serve Christ's Church in Rome by establishing a new monastic order, the Society of Jesus. Two of Ignatius's companions wander in the background. Domenichino's historically precise rendition of this episode coincides with the saint's canonization in July 1622.



Expulsion from Paradise

[Marcantonio Franceschini](#)

About 1690

Italian, 1648–1729

Oil on canvas

36 13/16 x 50 in. (93.5 x 127 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Because Adam and Eve had tasted the forbidden fruit, God expelled them from Paradise (Genesis 3:8–24). Eve's punishment was painful childbirth; Adam was condemned to laboring in the fields for his daily bread. In addition to garlands of leaves covering their loins, Adam and Eve wear animal skins. To prevent them from reentering the Garden of Eden, God posted a guard—an angel wielding a flaming and revolving sword.



Galatea in Her Shell Wagon

Francesco Albani

About 1635

Italian, 1578–1660

Oil on canvas

74 x 48 7/16 in. (188 x 123 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Albani emphasized Galatea as a symbol of ideal beauty, framed by her windblown red drapery. She is poised for a ride across the waters on a paddle-wheeled, porpoise-powered shell. A *putto*, arrow in one hand, red reins in the other, drives the inventive vehicle forward.

Albani's interest in depicting nude female mythological figures continued throughout his long life. Just a year before his death, he wrote that he took "great delight in the divine and earthly deities, in nymphs, putti, and graceful acts."

Elijah Receiving Bread from the Widow of Zarephath and Moses and the Messengers from Canaan

Giovanni Lanfranco

1621–24

Italian, 1582–1647

Oil on canvas

80x 96 in. (203.2 x 243.8 cm), 85 3/4 x 97 in. (217.8 x 246.4 cm)

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These two paintings come from a series executed for the Sacrament Chapel in the church of Saint Paul outside the Walls in Rome. In keeping with the chapel's dedication to the Eucharist, the biblical subjects were chosen because they foreshadow the bread and wine of Holy Communion. The Book of Numbers (13:17–26) relates how Moses sent messengers into Canaan to determine if the land was fertile. Moses and the messengers from Canaan return laden with grapes, a sign of the plenty in the Promised Land.

The companion piece shows the story of Elijah (1 Kings 17:8–24): the widow of Zarephath nourishes the prophet in the desert by baking bread from her frugal supply of miraculously replenishing grain.



The Four Evangelists: Saint Matthew, Saint Mark, Saint Luke, and Saint John
Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri)

About 1615

Italian, 1591–1666

Oil on canvas

35 1/16 x 28 1/8 in. (89 x 71.5 cm), 34 7/16 x 27 3/4 in. (87.5 x 70.5 cm), 34 7/16 x 27 15/16 in. (87.5 x 71 cm), 34 1/4 x 27 3/8 in. (87 x 69.5 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photographer: H.-P. Klut

The four Evangelists were the authors of the Gospels, which recount the story of Christ, his crucifixion, and its aftermath, each from a slightly different viewpoint. This series was painted for Padre Antonio Mirandola, who discovered and then promoted Guercino's career. In 1615 it was exhibited in Bologna, where the paintings came to the attention of the Ludovisi family. Guercino's portrait of the Ludovisi pope, Gregory XV, is in this exhibition.

Adopting a tradition of depicting the Evangelists with their attributes on four separate canvases, Guercino managed to endow each with a sense of individualized naturalism. In fact, were it not for the theme of writing and their identifiers, one might assume they were simply portraits or depictions of the four ages of man. Instead, each is given a distinct personality, a specific attribute, and each, oblivious to the viewer, is deeply engrossed in a specific task. Matthew is identified by an angel, who directly engages the viewer's attention and acts as a surrogate bookstand. Mark prepares his quill pen, with his identifying lion perched atop the shelf. Luke is shown as a painter, his brushes and palette in hand, as he contemplates his canvas (a framed image of his ox hangs on the wall). John, leaning upon his eagle, which conveniently grasps the pen and inkwell in its talon, reads what he has written.



The Suicide of Cleopatra

Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri)

About 1621

Italian, 1591–1666

Oil on canvas

46 x 36 3/4 in. (116.8 x 93.3 cm)

Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena, California

Probably created just before or after his arrival in Rome in June 1621, Guercino's painting might easily be thought to be a portrait of a woman interested in ophiology (the study of snakes). However, a learned spectator would have understood immediately that the snake in the basket of figs was an attribute identifying the figure as Cleopatra, queen of Egypt (69–30 b.c.). After her lover Antony's defeat at Actium by Octavian, Cleopatra

committed suicide by holding a viper to her breast.

Clad in sumptuous seventeenth-century dress and adorned with a fashionable jeweled headpiece, Guercino's Cleopatra is a pictorial examination of the decisive passions controlling the famous beauty of ancient Egypt, captivated as she was by love and loyalty.



Saint Cecilia
Guido Reni
About 1606
Italian, 1575–1642
Oil on canvas
37 3/4 x 29 1/2 in. (95.9 x 74.9 cm)
Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena, California

Saint Cecilia, an early martyr, took a vow of chastity that she maintained even after her marriage to Valerian, who, seeing his wife's guardian angel, chose to maintain his own purity as well. When Cecilia was being led to her wedding, music was heard, and instruments of various kinds became her identifying attribute. Reni's concentration on the saint in half-length, light illuminating the crucial elements of the composition, underscores Cecilia's emotional and religious rapture. Her fixed gaze is directed heavenward as she prepares to bow a violin herself; a small pipe organ can be seen at right.



Bacchus and Ariadne
Guido Reni
About 1620
Italian, 1575–1642
Oil on canvas
38 x 34 in. (96.5 x 86.4 cm)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Gift of the Ahmanson Foundation,
M.79.63
Photo © 2008 Museum Associates/LACMA

Following closely the story related by the ancient poet Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* (8:176–182), Reni translated the text into its purest visual form. Ariadne, identifiable by the constellation (the Corona Borealis) just visible in the sky above her head ("that she might shine amongst deathless stars"), has been abandoned on the island of Naxos by her lover Theseus (indicated only by his ships' sails on the horizon). Bacchus, crowned with a wreath of grape leaves, finds her alone on the beach and attempts to comfort her. The subject allowed Reni to convey the extraordinary emotional power of Ovid's story of abandonment and to demonstrate his proficiency in depicting idealized nudes of both sexes.

Christ with the Crown of Thorns



Christ with the Crown of Thorns

Guido Reni

About 1636–37

Italian, 1575–1642

Oil on copper

29 15/16 x 23 5/8 in. (76 x 60 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photographers: Estel/Klut

In this painting the light reveals the tortured body of Christ. Before being sentenced by Pilate, he was mocked by soldiers. They dressed him as a parody of a king, with a crown of thorns, a purple mantle, and a reed as his scepter.

Famous for his ability to express emotions and evoke feelings, Reni executed this subject several times in his career. This picture of private devotion is an intimate confrontation between the spectator and the subject: the painting could assist in imagining the Passion of Christ.



Christ with the Crown of Thorns

Guido Reni

About 1639–40

Italian, 1575–1642

Oil on panel

19 5/16 x 14 9/16 in. (49 x 37 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Focusing on the head of Christ, this dramatic close-up reveals his pale face, painted with various tones of green and red. Every brushstroke evokes his suffering. Reni invented this type of image for a huge altarpiece depicting the Crucifixion for the Capuchin church outside Bologna in 1617–18. He later painted the single head several times. This panel was used for private devotion. The inventory of the collection of Augustus the Strong in Dresden in 1722 indicates it was a papal gift, perhaps from Innocent XII, who was pope in 1697, when Augustus the Strong converted to Catholicism.

Guercino

Because of his congenital squint (in Italian, *guercio*), Giovanni Francesco Barbieri became known as Guercino. He never studied with the Carracci, but he was deeply influenced by their theory and practice. In 1621 the Bolognese pope Gregory XV recognized Guercino's talent and summoned him to Rome, where he painted his papal

portrait. Following Gregory's death in 1623, the artist returned to his native Cento and finally moved to Bologna after the death of Guido Reni in 1642 created new opportunities for him there. Guercino's career can be divided into three phases. The pre-Roman years are represented in the exhibition by *The Four Evangelists*. The Roman phase, in addition to the papal portrait, includes *The Suicide of Cleopatra*. The three paintings here are among the finest products of Guercino's artistic maturity. The dramatic energy of his earlier works has given way to a restrained classicism characterized by narrative clarity and dignity, without diminishing the psychological penetration. The palette of colors shifts to a higher key, and the scenes are suffused with a warm glow.



Disegno and Colore
Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri)
About 1640
Italian, 1591–1666
Oil on canvas
90 15/16 x 71 5/16 in. (231 x 181.1 cm)
Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Here Guercino depicted the two fundamentals of picture making—*disegno* (drawing), representing the conceptual beginnings of painting in the person of a bearded sage, and *colore* (color), infusing life in the form of pigments, in the guise of a sumptuously dressed woman. Guercino gave visual form to the ongoing intellectual debate about the roles of *disegno* and *colore* in art theory as well as personal insight into his own artistic process.

The turbaned beauty peruses a drawing of a sleeping cupid (an *amor fidele*—a symbol of the artist's dedication to his art) offered to her by the old man; the same figure acquires the quality of living flesh on the canvas, palette and brushes in hand



Lot and his Daughters
Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri)
About 1650
Italian, 1591–1666
Oil on canvas
69 5/16 x 88 9/16 in. (176 x 225 cm)
Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photographer: H.-P. Klut

The subject of Lot and his daughters tested the artist's ability to depict a variety of ages, both sexes, and landscape and still life elements, as well as the moral dilemma implicit to the story. When the wrath of God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire, as recounted in the Book of Genesis (18:16–33; 19:1–38), Lot, his wife, and his two daughters escaped, having been forewarned by angels. As the family fled, Lot's wife (seen in the center background) disobeyed and looked back and was transformed into a pillar of salt. Thinking their father was the only man left in the world, the daughters devised a plan to perpetuate their race. They decided to get their father drunk for two nights and sleep with him. They both became pregnant.

Here the incest is downplayed, and the seduction remains in the future. Lot's daughters appear as if at a picnic. One daughter pours wine to her father under the vigilant gaze of her sister. Only the presence of Lot's wife and the burning city in the background recall the vital matter of survival at the center of the story.



The Return of the Prodigal Son
Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri)
About 1654–55
Italian, 1591–1666
Oil on canvas
61 1/4 x 57 1/2 in. (155.6 x 146.1 cm)
Timken Museum of Art, San Diego

The Gospel of Luke (15:11–32) tells the story of a youth who broke the ancient law of inheritance. He embarked on a sinful life, wasting his portion of money, and then, driven by contrition and filial piety, returned home for forgiveness.

This painting, one of several interpretations of the theme by Guercino, is redolent of contemporary theater, which emphasized the emotional encounter between the father and son. Guercino's close framing of the central characters—the loving father trying to embrace his son, who turns his head away to hide his tears—invites the viewer into the drama, while the servant theatrically pulling the curtain engages the viewer with his direct gaze.

Painting on Copper

To protect their works from the ravages of time, artists have always looked for painting supports that promise permanence. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, copper plates came into use as a new support for painting. Bologna was one of the major centers of this technique. The copper was hammered or rolled into sheets averaging a thickness of about three millimeters (one-eighth of an inch). Apart from stability and transportability, the main reason for the popularity of copper panels was their brilliant visual effect. Because the hard, smooth material does not absorb oil pigments, painters were able to execute

intricate details and create a glossy surface in jewel-like colors. Meant to be seen up close, such radiant cabinet pictures were highly sought after by collectors for display in small private rooms, or cabinets. They also served as powerful devotional images, helping viewers reflect upon biblical events and the saints as role models for their own lives.



The Way to Calvary
Domenichino (Domenico Zampieri)
About 1610
Italian, 1581–1641
Oil on copper
21 1/8 x 26 5/8 in. (53.7 x 67.6 cm)
The J. Paul Getty Museum

The contrast between Christ's fallen body and the violent movements of the guard, hastening him on the road to Calvary, creates drama in this painting. Thrown to the ground, Christ addresses the viewer with his inquisitive gaze and silent cry.

Domenichino infused his composition with multiple actions and figures described in the Gospels: Simon of Cyrene tries to ease the load on Christ's body, an attendant carries the ladder later used in the execution, and the curious crowd observes the heightened moment of physical despondency and moral strength that preceded Christ's execution.



The Birth of Adonis
Marcantonio Franceschini
About 1685–90
Italian, 1648–1729
Oil on copper
19 1/8 x 27 3/16 in. (48.5 x 69 cm)
Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photographers: Estel/Klut

The ancient poet Ovid tells the story of Adonis, a boy of incomparable beauty, in his *Metamorphoses* (10:503–514). Focusing on the awe and curiosity caused by the infant's birth—"for he looked like one of the naked cupids, painted in pictures, differing from them only in his attire"—the artist showed how Adonis made even the god Apollo kneel, while two nymphs point to the swollen tree trunk from which the infant was born. Franceschini highlighted the contrasting elements of the story: he showed the weeping of Adonis's mother, who was converted into a myrrh tree after committing incest with her father, Theias, and also the gods' regal submission to the conquering power of Adonis's beauty.



Holy Family with Angels
Francesco Albani
About 1613–15
Italian, 1578–1660
Oil on copper
15 1/2 x 11 7/8 in. (39.4 x 30.2 cm)
Lynda and Stewart Resnick, Beverly Hills

Albani's painting strikes a balance between the elegance of its execution and the intricacy of its meditation on Christian symbolism. The Virgin gazes at her husband, Joseph, who has been interrupted in his reading by the arrival of a pair of angels, while the Christ Child looks out at the viewer. The animated high relief decorating the remnants of a supposedly pagan altar upon which Joseph rests his book is a disguised allegory of Charity, one of the Christian cardinal virtues, represented here as a caring mother nourishing her children with water.



The Blessed Bernard Tolomei and the Plague of Siena
[Giuseppe Maria Crespi](#)
About 1735
Italian, 1665–1747
Oil on copper
16 13/16 x 26 1/4 in. (42.7 x 66.7 cm)
The J. Paul Getty Museum

Learning of a severe outbreak of the plague in his native Siena in 1348, the Blessed Bernard Tolomei (1272–1348) abandoned the safety of his monastery on Monte Oliveto. Aware that he was likely to become infected with the incurable disease, he attended to the plague victims with selfless courage and paid for it with his life. Here Bernard is aided by fellow Olivetan monks in their white habits. In a scene strewn with the sick and dying, a child vainly clings to his lifeless mother. The desolate atmosphere conveys the horrors of the plague and Bernard's heroic self-sacrifice.



The Martyrdom of Saint Apollonia
[Guido Reni](#)
About 1632–33
Italian, 1575–1642
Oil on copper
17 1/2 x 13 9/16 in. (44.5 x 34.5 cm)
Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Reni's depiction of the early Christian Saint Apollonia juxtaposes the heroic fortitude of the virgin saint with the cruelty of her executioner, who extracts her teeth with pincers.

Saint Apollonia's youthful beauty, upright posture, and the expression on her face are intended to elicit empathy and admiration from the viewer, while an angel hovering above delivers the martyr's palm.

Crespi's *Seven Sacraments*

Giuseppe Maria Crespi's celebrated cycle, *The Seven Sacraments*, is one of the greatest achievements of eighteenth-century painting. It documents religious rituals from three hundred years ago (the date of 1712 appears on the baptismal font in the *Baptism*). The sacraments are understood by the Roman Catholic Church as a visible form of God's invisible grace. These rites were part of the everyday life of any eighteenth-century Catholic. The artist presented the sacraments as he witnessed and experienced them himself, in contemporary dress, without idealization. He went to great lengths to re-create the scenes as faithfully as possible, for example, by having a real confessional carried from a nearby church to his studio. The somber, almost nocturnal atmosphere of these paintings is juxtaposed with shimmering fabrics, faces, and metal liturgical instruments reflecting the light. Many of the immaculately observed details are reminiscent of still lifes, for instance, the black rosary beads around the woman's wrist in the *Baptism* or the holy-water vessel and sprinkler in the center foreground of the *Extreme Unction*.



Baptism

Giuseppe Maria Crespi

About 1712

Italian, 1665–1747

Oil on canvas

50 x 36.6 in. (127 x 93 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photographers: Estel/Klut

Baptism is the sacrament that admits a candidate to the Church. Its primary effect is forgiveness of Original Sin. Children are usually baptized soon after birth. The priest administers Baptism by pouring water on the candidate's head and pronouncing a blessing in the name of the Holy Trinity—God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

This label describes how the Roman Catholic Church understood the sacrament at the time this painting was created.



Eucharist

Giuseppe Maria Crespi

About 1712

Italian, 1665–1747

Oil on canvas

50 x 37 3/16 in. (127 x 94.5 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photographer: H.-P. Klut

The Eucharist, instituted by Christ at the Last Supper, is defined by the Church as the sacrament that contains "the Body and Blood, soul and divinity, of Jesus Christ appearing as bread and wine." Only ordained priests can consecrate the bread and wine so that their substance is changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. This transformation is called Transubstantiation. During Communion, the lay faithful only receive the Eucharistic bread, not the wine. They kneel in front of the priest, who places the Host (the consecrated bread) on the tongue.



Confession

Giuseppe Maria Crespi

About 1712

Italian, 1665–1747

Oil on canvas

50 x 37 3/16 in. (127 x 94.5 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photographers: Estel/Klut

In the Sacrament of Penance, the penitent confesses sins to a priest to obtain God's forgiveness. He or she kneels at the side of the confessional, concealed from the priest by a latticework screen. After hearing the confession, the priest may impose a penance—such as the recitation of prayers—and grants absolution in God's name.

This label describes how the Roman Catholic Church understood the sacrament at the time this painting was created.



Confirmation

Giuseppe Maria Crespi

About 1712

Italian, 1665–1747

Oil on canvas

49 3/16 x 36 9/16 in. (125 x 92.9 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photographer: Steuerlein

Confirmation, one of the sacraments of Christian initiation (the others are Baptism and the Eucharist), is typically administered at about the age of seven. The celebration of Confirmation, the completion of baptismal grace, is reserved to the bishop. The moment shown here is the anointing of the forehead with chrism oil.

This label describes how the Roman Catholic Church understood the sacrament at the time this painting was created.



Matrimony

Giuseppe Maria Crespi

About 1712

Italian, 1665–1747

Oil on canvas

50 x 36 13/16 in. (127 x 93.5 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photographer: Steuerlein

The Sacrament of Matrimony (marriage) creates a sacred, perpetual, and indissoluble union, obliging the couple to live together for life. It is administered by the spouses themselves by declaring, in the presence of a priest and two witnesses, that they take each other in marriage. The blessing that the priest gives to the married couple is not necessary to constitute the sacrament, but it is given to sanction their union in the name of the Church and to invoke on them the blessing of God.

This label describes how the Roman Catholic Church understood the sacrament at the time this painting was created.



Ordination

Giuseppe Maria Crespi

About 1712

Italian, 1665–1747

Oil on canvas

50 x 37 3/8 in. (127 x 95 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photographer: Steuerlein

The consecration of a priest, called the Sacrament of Ordination, enables him to act in the name and in the person of Christ. To confer the power of consecrating the bread and wine of the Eucharist, the bishop hands the priest a chalice with wine and a plate with a Host (the consecrated bread), saying, "Receive the power to offer sacrifice to God and to celebrate Masses both for the living and for the dead."

This label describes how the Roman Catholic Church understood the sacrament at the time this painting

was created.



Extreme Unction

Giuseppe Maria Crespi

About 1712

Italian, 1665–1747

Oil on canvas

50 x 37 3/16 in. (127 x 94.5 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photographer: H.-P. Klut

Extreme Unction, also known as the anointing of the sick or the last rites, is the sacrament administered to the dying to prepare them for their journey into eternal life. Using oil blessed by a bishop, the priest anoints the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hands, and—the moment shown in this painting—the feet. In the sparse monastic cell depicted here, a skull placed on a chair serves as a reminder of the transience of earthly life.

This label describes how the Roman Catholic Church understood the sacrament at the time this painting was created.

The Virgin and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist

The three pictures in this section are by three different painters, but their subject is the same: the Virgin and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist. This meeting is not recounted in the Bible. It was believed to have occurred after the Holy Family's return from Egypt, when they stayed with John's mother, Elizabeth, the Virgin Mary's cousin. Annibale Carracci, Lanfranco, and Guido Reni all conveyed the tangible intimacy and tenderness of touch between the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child. In Annibale's and Lanfranco's eyes, he is a baby snuggling against his mother, while Reni depicted a toddler already able to stand upright with minimal support. Reni also included all of John the Baptist's traditional attributes—a tunic made of animal skin, a reed cross, and a lamb. The other two painters, restricted by smaller canvases, merely allude to the identity of the second child.



Madonna with the Swallow

Annibale Carracci

About 1589–90

Italian, 1560–1609

Oil on canvas

39 3/4 x 33 7/16 in. (101 x 85 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photographer: H.-P. Klut

Here the Madonna acknowledges the swallow perched on Saint John's forefinger while the Christ Child looks directly at the viewer. Seated on a pillow, he reaches for his mother's veil while holding an apple to his chin. Annibale presented them with all the naturalism inspired by a close study of actual models and alluded to Christ as the new Adam (the apple), his passion and death (the Madonna's veil recalling the shroud), and his resurrection (the swallow), which all imply a profound future for the three protagonists. The human theme and composition are relatively simple, but the symbols are complex. Annibale eliminated all extraneous references to the outside world and concentrated the viewers' attention on the humanity of the presentation.



The Virgin and Child with Saint John the Baptist
Giovanni Lanfranco
About 1630–32
Italian, 1582–1647
Oil on canvas
38 1/16 x 29 3/4 in. (96.7 x 75.6 cm)
The J. Paul Getty Museum

An air of intimacy and warmth imbues this canvas. The Virgin's protective embrace brings the Christ Child closer to his cousin Saint John the Baptist, standing next to them and clad in an animal skin. The playful gesture of Christ pulling the goldfinch clenched in his fist away from John's outstretched arm suggests Christ's future role as the harbinger of light—symbolism contained in the word *lucina* (goldfinch, in Latin).



The Virgin and Child with Saint John the Baptist
Guido Reni
About 1640–42
Italian, 1575–1642
Oil on canvas
68 x 56 in. (172.7 x 142.2 cm)
The J. Paul Getty Museum

Supported by the Virgin, the Christ Child offers to his kneeling cousin Saint John the Baptist a white dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit. The cross in John's hand and a lamb in the corner refer to Christ's future sacrifice on the Cross. Joseph enters the room from the back. The silvery palette, abbreviated forms, and apparent lack of finish are typical of Reni's late style and were quite intentional.

Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

Joseph, the hero of this biblical story (Genesis 39), was sold into slavery by his brothers. His new master, Potiphar, a minister of the Egyptian Pharaoh, soon promoted the diligent young man to overseer of his household. The handsome Joseph attracted the attention of Potiphar's wife, who pressed him to share her bed, undeterred by his repeated refusals. One day she found him alone in the house. Clutching his cloak, she pleaded with him once again to yield to her desire. Joseph fled, leaving his cloak in her hands. When Potiphar came home, his humiliated and vengeful wife accused Joseph of attempted rape, using the cloak as evidence. Guido Reni, Simone Cantarini, and Carlo Cignani each responded differently to the task of depicting the decisive moment in this encounter, but they all chose a three-quarter-length format, concentrating on the upper body and bringing the viewer into close contact with the figures. Joseph's raised hand, with an open palm that articulates his rejection of the attempted seduction, is another feature common to all three pictures.



Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

Carlo Cignani

About 1670–80

Italian, 1628–1719

Oil on canvas

39 x 39 in. (99.1 x 99.1 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photographer: H.-P. Klut

In Cignani's hands, Potiphar's wife becomes a lusty woman freely displaying her charms. While she is not touching Joseph's body in the other two paintings, here she is much more interested in holding onto him than in grasping his cloak. By making the temptress extremely desirable, Cignani highlighted Joseph's virtue and chastity: he valiantly tries to fend off her advances and free himself. His head is thrown back in emotional turmoil, while the hands send a strong signal about his struggle to ward off both carnal impulse and physical closeness.



Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

Guido Reni

About 1630

Italian, 1575–1642

Oil on canvas

50 3/4 x 66 15/16 in. (128.9 x 170 cm)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Potiphar's wife is usually depicted as assertive and lusty, as demonstrated in the other two paintings of this subject. Here, however, she is characterized as a striking young woman who is genuinely in love, pining for Joseph. Her melancholy gaze expresses that, deep down, she knows that her battle for Joseph's heart is lost. The dress and cloak she wears epitomize Reni's much praised skill at painting elegantly draped silks in iridescent colors.



Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

Simone Cantarini

About 1640

Italian, 1612–1648

Oil on canvas

54 5/16 x 70 1/2 in. (138 x 179 cm)

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Photo © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Here Potiphar's wife firmly clutches Joseph's cloak and pursues him with a penetrating, scornful gaze. She clearly considers it her right to treat the young man as a piece of personal property, as a slave to be commanded, not someone who needs to be romantically seduced. This illustrates her blunt and imperious summons, "Lie with me" (Genesis 39:7, 39:12). Cantarini, a volatile personality, painted this canvas a few years after falling out with Guido Reni and leaving his studio.