

OBJECT

of the **month**

June 2020



TRANSCRIPT

Hello. My name is Joan Montenegro and as a Museum Guide, I will be taking you on a journey today back in time—approximately 500 years back.

This painting called, *The Holy Family with a Donor in a Landscape*, by Francesco Bissolo, was painted in 1520, using oil on a wood panel. Let's take a closer look, shall we?

This painting was done in a style we call the High Renaissance of the Venetian School. Just look at its vibrant primary colors and its really warm, wonderful display of human emotion, as depicted in the gentle touch of the blessed virgin caressing the Christ child's hand. Take a closer look at the figure in the foreground; who is this? We know that he is not part of the holy family—why is he in the painting? What we do know is that during the period in which this piece was painted, it was very popular for wealthy people to hire artists to

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paint a religious scene and incorporate themselves into the painting. Again, but why? We can only speculate as to his intentions. Was he concerned about his afterlife? If you contributed to the creation of a work of art today, how would you want to demonstrate your patronage?

The artist of this masterpiece, Bissolo, was born in the northeastern part of Italy, in a small city called Treviso. Treviso is located very close to Venice—actually, many people call it, “Little Venice,” because it is laced with canals throughout. Numerous buildings date back to the Middle Ages, and wonderful frescos still grace its churches. It was into this artistic culture that Bissolo was born. He was surrounded by beauty and attended the Venetian School of Art under the tutelage of the great master, Bellini.

The Renaissance was a period in which you see a growing individualism, a growing worldliness, but yet there was still a very powerful draw that the church had. Bissolo and Bellini’s art shows a steady evolution from a purely religious narrative emphasis to a new naturalism of setting and landscape.

Look at the church in the left, rear background of the painting. If you were living in this area of Italy at the time this was painted, you might very well recognize this church as the one you attend. Also notice that there are no halos above the holy family’s heads. Bissolo here was attempting to make them more human-like, versus celestial, and all set in the northern Italian landscape—which again, the viewers might recognize as their own.

As stated in E.H. Gombrich’s “The Story of Art,” I quote: mingling mortal human interaction and the divinity is really what the Renaissance is all about.

If you would like more information about this painting, go to the Dayton Art Institute, “What is a Masterpiece?” [website](#) and thank you for tuning in.

END TRANSCRIPT

Click [here](#) for full multimedia presentation.

RESOURCES

www.daytonartinstitute.org
www.harvardartmuseums.org
www.metmuseum.org
[E.H. Gombrich’s “The Story of Art”](#)

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