

BECOMING AN ARTIST

self-guided tour

**MUSEUM
OF FINE ARTS
ST. PETERSBURG**

BECOMING AN ARTIST

Throughout the ages, artists have trained in various ways. Some of them are self-taught, others in apprenticeships or workshops, and still others in formal academies. All of them have been in some way influenced by the society that surrounds them, and by the artistic culture of their time. After the training period and early forays into producing their own art, the most talented young artists go beyond their training to create unique works that challenge and sometimes change the art world. Through the following pieces, we will see how the urge to create manifests in each of these artists.



SCAN THIS CODE FOR A MAP IDENTIFYING
THE LOCATIONS OF THE ARTWORKS

ROMAN WORKSHOPS

Torso of Aphrodite, 2nd Century A.D.

FIND THIS IN THE ANCIENT ART GALLERIES

From the Roman Republic through the Empire, a vast number of workshops produced sculptures for official, religious, and private use. The materials were mainly cast bronze and carved marble, and styles varied considerably over time and from region to region. The earlier idealized perfection of Greek sculpture was blended with a greater interest in realism, resulting in the development of true portraiture. Markets for sculpture ranged from the aristocratic elite in urban centers who hired the most skilled sculptors, to the provinces, where the quality tended to be lower. Official commissions were produced in the same workshops as those of private patrons of means. These included political portraits, monuments, religious/cult images, as well as funerary and other sculptures for private individuals who began to collect sculpture as art.



RENAISSANCE APPRENTICESHIP

Master of the Greenville Tondo, *Adoration of the Christ Child by Mary and Joseph*, Early 16th Century

FIND THIS IN THE EUROPEAN ART, 13TH-18TH CENTURIES GALLERIES

This painting was almost certainly made with the help of an apprentice. During the Italian Renaissance, many artists had workshops that took on such young artistically inclined students—commonly young men ranging in age from thirteen to seventeen. In the artist's studio they did a lot of the unglamorous, non-creative labor necessary to make paintings. This included grinding pigments, mixing paints, painting backgrounds, and priming canvases or panels. As their skill progressed, they might be allowed to paint figures, which could then be touched up by the master if necessary. Eventually they might advance to the point of opening their own studios. Two of the most famous artists of this period who served as apprentices are Leonardo Da Vinci (1462–1519) and Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564).



WOMEN ARTISTS

Elisabeth Louise Vigée-LeBrun, *Julie as Flora, Roman Goddess of Flowers*, 1799

FIND THIS IN THE EUROPEAN ART, 13TH-18TH CENTURIES GALLERIES

Women had limited opportunities for an art education before the late 1800s. They were denied entry to many prestigious schools, and when they were admitted, were not allowed to attend drawing classes due to the presence of nude models. Elisabeth Louise Vigée-LeBrun learned painting from her artist father and started selling her work as a teenager. When she was nineteen, officials shut down her studio insisting that she had to be a member of a guild in order to practice professionally. Eventually, she became a member of France's elite Academy of Painting and Sculpture—an organization that rarely admitted women. Though adept at a variety of compositions, Vigée-LeBrun specialized in portraits, which were considered a suitable subject for women at the time.



FAMILY AFFAIRS

Jan Brueghel the Younger, *Still Life with Flowers*, 17th Century

FIND THIS IN THE EUROPEAN ART, 13TH-18TH CENTURIES GALLERIES

This painting reflects the skill of the Brueghel family, a dynasty of Flemish painters. Jan Brueghel the Younger—who painted this work—was the grandson of Pieter Brueghel the Elder (1526–1559), one of the most famous artists of the Northern Renaissance. When his grandfather died during his father's infancy, his father was trained by his grandmother, the artist Mayken Verhulst. She, in turn, was the daughter of yet another painter. Netherlandish people of the time had progressive attitudes towards women's education, especially if they studied with male relatives. Painters often married the sisters or daughters of other artists. This meant that artistic influences, apprenticeships, and styles overlapped in much the same way as associated family trees.



THE ACADEMY

Jules-Joseph Lefebvre, *Julia Foster Ward*, 1880

FIND THIS IN THE EUROPEAN & AMERICAN ART, 19TH-20TH CENTURIES GALLERY

In nineteenth century France, the most prestigious way to study art was academic training at the École des Beaux-Arts or, school of fine arts. There, students followed a rigorous, years-long program of drawing live models and copies of classical sculpture; this served as a basis for eventually making paintings. Their study culminated in the Prix de Rome, literally the "prize of Rome" competition, which if awarded, gave a student a scholarship to study in the Italian capital for five years. Lefebvre won in 1861. Winning this prestigious prize not only allowed young artists to study with French masters in Rome, it also helped ensure their professional success. Lefebvre's years of training is reflected in the highly polished realism of this portrait, and extraordinary attention to details.



REBELS

Claude Monet, *Houses of Parliament: Effect of Fog, London, 1904*

FIND THIS IN THE EUROPEAN & AMERICAN ART, 19TH-20TH CENTURIES GALLERY

The term “Impressionist” wasn’t a compliment when Claude Monet began painting. It reflected criticism to his loose brushwork, unblended colors, and subject matter drawn from every day, modern life. Monet studied art at one of the many provincial schools in France, but had little interest in their formal, methodical approach to art making. Nonetheless, like most artists of his generation, he went to Paris to copy paintings in the Louvre. Rather than studying the works of earlier masters, he turned his attention to the surrounding streets.

This focus upon the mundane, as well as his attempt to capture both light and movement, were the basis of his style. Rejected from the Salon de Paris—the massive annual exhibition—Monet nonetheless persevered, and successfully followed his own artistic vision.



MODERN ARTISTS

Georgia O’Keeffe, *New York – Night (Madison Avenue), 1926*

FIND THIS IN THE AMERICAN ART, 19TH-21ST CENTURIES GALLERIES

Although pioneering American modernist Georgia O’Keeffe had diverse formal training, she stated of her shift to pure abstraction in 1915: “I have things in my head that are not like what anyone has taught me—shapes and ideas so near to me... I decided to start anew—to strip away what I had been taught.” O’Keeffe’s early work in abstraction garnered a solo exhibition at Alfred Stieglitz’s gallery 291 in 1916, a renowned space for avant-garde artists including Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse, who had their American debuts there. Her later, bold paintings of New York skyscrapers, giant flowers, skulls and desert landscapes made her famous and inspired other modern artists.



Cover: Jules-Joseph Lefebvre, *Julia Foster Ward* (detail), 1880, Museum purchase with funds donated by Mary Alice and Doyle McClendon
Inside: *Torso of Aphrodite*, 2nd Century A.D., Museum purchase with funds donated by The Stuart Society