



Madonna and Child and the Infant Saint John

Date

ca. 1529

Primary Maker

Andrea del Sarto

Medium

oil on canvas transferred from wood

Description

In the hands of Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michelangelo, the humanist style of late-15th century

Italian art, with its concentration on detail and multiplicity of parts, was transformed into a style in which the various elements of the composition were coordinated to create a unified work, recalling the classical perfection of ancient art. Andrea del Sarto was the leading exponent of this new, High Renaissance style in Florence in the first three decades of the 16th century. His paintings are characterized by idealized, weighty figures, which are clearly positioned in space in a balanced arrangement of forms. He was unique among his Florentine contemporaries in his preference for lively color schemes and his inclination toward melancholic expression. Andrea del Sarto's style was influential for the most important Mannerists of the next generation, including Jacopo Pontormo, Rosso Fiorentino, and Giorgio Vasari, all three of whom trained in his workshop. The composition of the Madonna and Child and the Infant Saint John is a pastiche of designs invented by Andrea del Sarto for other paintings. It was common practice in this period for members of a large workshop to manufacture commercial works such as this painting, using existing preparatory drawings by the master. In this particular case, the figural grouping of the Madonna and Child, which ultimately relies upon Leonardo's pyramidal designs, was repeated from Andrea's large altarpiece Madonna with Eight Saints for Saint Dominic's, Sarzana (Liguria) of 1528. The figure of Saint John was similarly derived from other devotional images of the Holy Family by Andrea. The ambiguous relationship of the figures to the background suggests that the composition was not actually designed by Andrea himself.

Dimensions

Sight: 26 3/4 in. (67.9 cm) Framed: 5 x 36 1/2 in. (12.7 x 92.7 cm)