

## Changes in Artistic Method

During the Renaissance, painters used two major innovations: the use of linear perspective and the introduction of the vanishing point. Linear perspective is a system in which a painter creates space and distance on a two-dimensional space. The painter first establishes a horizon at eye level, imagining that the viewer is looking into the distance from a window. The center of where the horizon appears to meet the ground is the vanishing point. The painter draws straight lines connecting the viewer's eye to this point to create a sense of distance and depth. Architectural and geographical representations ease this process. For example, the presence of barrel vaults and series of rounded arches can be used to draw the eye to the selected point on the horizon. At the vanishing point, the subject of the painting appears. Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472), humanist, painter, and architect, took the innovation of linear perspective with its vanishing point and systematized it for painters in his treatise *On Painting* (1433), which was published in both Latin and Italian. He encouraged the use of a mathematical grid to plot spatial elements of an image. Grid lines on the surface one was going to paint represented the rays from the viewer's eye to the vanishing point. To do this, Alberti urged the painter to imagine that these rays and the plane created a "visual pyramid." The painter determined the size of figures (larger if near, smaller if far) based on this grid.

When human figures are represented, they appear in space and time, moving and reacting in and through their surroundings. This lends a narrative quality to the painting. A story unfolds before the viewer's eyes, including the personalities of the figures depicted. The painter advances the narrative by representing emotion of the human figures, which appear in realistic proportions, through movement, gestures, and facial expression—elements first attributed to the Italian painter Giotto in the late fourteenth century. All of these aspects—the use of linear perspective, vanishing point, trueness to human form, and the representation of emotion and personality—characterize what may be called the Renaissance style, which became the benchmark for painting by the second decade of the fifteenth century. The centrality of human emotion, experience, and form reflects the influence of the humanist movement and its theme of human worth and focus on individuality. In line with this influence, as well as increasing desire by patrons to be commemorated, we see the rise of portraiture in this period. In portraits, the sitter's activities, tastes, and personality come through, helping to define the sitter as a distinguished individual. Despite the realism of other genres of painting, portraits tended to be idealized, from glossing over physical blemishes to rendering a younger version of the sitter. Nevertheless, portraits communicate personal aspects of the sitter. For example, Titian's 1567-8 portrait of Jacopo Strada shows the sitter surrounded by antiquities—a high-stakes trade that required a good deal of wealth in order to participate. In other instances, such as Piero della Francesca's 1470s portrait of Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, the sitter's vast lands can be seen through a window, and the painting depicts his broken nose from tournament combat as a distinguishing mark.