

This gallery houses the earliest paintings in the Barber's collection, dating between 1280 and 1600. It has a geographical focus on some of the key artistic centres of Italy: Florence, Siena, and Venice. These are interspersed with notable works by Northern European painters.

The majority of the artworks here are dedicated to Christian stories, reflective of the prevailing religious views in Europe at the time. This informs the themes in the first two bays. The middle bays focus on portraiture and classical subjects, themes that blossomed during the Renaissance (the re-birth of art and literature). The final two bays orient around the Barber's fine collection of Venetian paintings, which present a visual record of Venice's artistic progress over a 150-year span.

In this gallery you will discover altarpieces and devotional paintings, alongside portraits, furniture decorations and mythological narratives. As you explore this space, take time to consider which objects you connect with. What stories or themes feel relevant to you?

*These paintings may not speak to me as a Christian, but they do speak to me as a human.*

Mohammed, Association of British Muslims.

The Barber's Green Gallery has changed. A sixteen-month period (beginning in August 2022) of extensive research and engagement with the Barber's audiences, has culminated in the redisplay, rehang, and reinterpretation of this gallery. You will find new information, labels and designs, complemented by online material found on our website.

Supported by the National Gallery and Art Fund, Dr Chloe Church, a National Gallery Curatorial Trainee, has led this project with the Barber. The project aims to increase access to, and engagement with, our pre-1600 Italian paintings found in this space, and to enable audiences to discover new stories within the historic collections.

This fully funded traineeship has been kindly supported by Art Fund with the assistance of the Vivmar Foundation.

Use this guide on your journey. Please give us feedback on what you find.

## 1 Devotion

This bay explores Christian themes, people, and narratives. These paintings inspired viewers to devote themselves to God. Several of the people painted here are also considered holy in other faiths. In Islam, we might recognise Isa (Jesus), his mother Maryam (Mary), and the prophet Yahya (John the Baptist).

While most of these paintings date before 1500, there is a 20th-century painting on the central wall that reminds us of the important role religion has played throughout history.

## 2 Motherhood

Mary is a figure of motherhood and devotion across multiple faiths. She is commonly known as the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus, whom Christians believe is God incarnate (in flesh). Maryam (Mary) is also revered with special honour in Islam as the woman chosen by Allāh to be the mother of the prophet, Isa (Jesus).

Her story reveals the fullness of human experience. The central painting in the bay records the celebration of Mary's maternal relationship to Jesus, who is depicted here as a baby. The outer paintings focus on Mary's sadness as she witnesses Jesus's sacrificial life.

## 3 Identity

How can you discover more about the identity of a sitter in a portrait through clues within the image?

Portraits enable us to tell stories about society at the time they are painted. These stories are told through iconography (images and symbols) and may represent religion, status and power or personal attributes. Here you will encounter Northern European artworks that contain signs and symbols of the people they represent, which tell us more about who they are and why they were painted.

## 4 Classical Interiors

As the Renaissance blossomed, 'humanist' themes became increasingly important. Humanism is the philosophy that focusses on the achievements of humans rather than a deity.

In this bay, you will discover objects that celebrate classical arts and literature. The works were inspired by stories from ancient history and Greco-Roman mythology. Several of them would have been displayed as decoration in the homes of their wealthy and powerful patrons.

## 5 Venetian Masters

By the 1500s, Venice was one of wealthiest cities in Europe due to its coastal location that afforded fantastic trading links with the rest of Europe and the Ottoman Empire.

These two final bays in the Green Gallery showcase works by the masters of the Venetian Renaissance. From Giovanni Bellini to Paolo Veronese, observe how artists used the new arrival of oil paints to paint religious subjects that capture the vivacity and sparkle of life on the Adriatic Sea.

## Map

