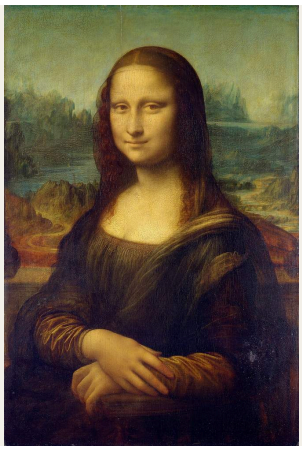
PARIS, FRANCE

Louvre: Masterpieces

Twenty paintings from the Louvre's collections, Cimabue to Delacroix.



The Louvre in Paris began as a medieval fortress, became a royal palace and opened as a public museum during the French Revolution. Twenty pictures cover very little of its collections. The famous names are here, Leonardo, Vermeer, Rembrandt and David among them. So are pictures that are easy to walk past on the way to them: Cimabue's Virgin on a gold background, a fragment by Bosch, a kitchen still life by Chardin, and Hubert Robert's view of the Louvre's own Grande Galerie imagined in ruins.

Raphael, Rembrandt, David and Delacroix each recur in the list, so you can compare an artist with himself as well as with his neighbours. Rembrandt, for instance, appears once telling a biblical story and once as his own sitter at the easel. The scale varies as much as the subject matter. Vermeer's Lacemaker could almost be held in two hands, while Veronese's Wedding at Cana spreads a banquet across a vast canvas.

Artline chose these works from documented museum holdings, independently of the museum. A picture in the collection is not necessarily on the wall, because it may be on loan or off display. Dates and attributions keep the qualifications given in the linked records.

Explore this selection in Artline

See the selected works alongside books and events from their period, or compare when the artists lived. The books and events provide context, not evidence of direct influence. Works without confirmed dates remain in this guide.

Artworks in context Who lived when?

artlines.org/guides/louvre

The selection · 20

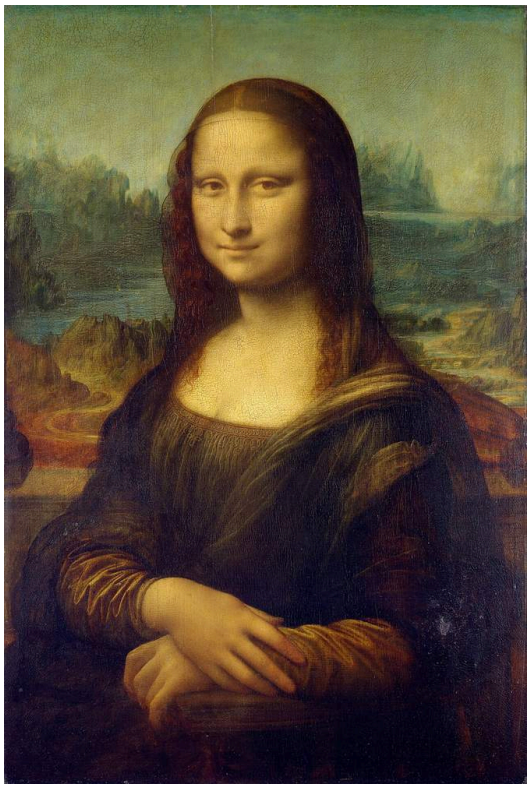
1. Mona Lisa
   Leonardo da Vinci · 1503–1519
2. The Lacemaker
   Johannes Vermeer · c. 1669–1670
3. Liberty Leading the People
   Eugène Delacroix · 1830
4. The Raft of the Medusa
   Théodore Géricault · 1818–1819
5. The Wedding at Cana
   Paolo Veronese · 1562–1563
6. The Intervention of the Sabine Women
   Jacques-Louis David · 1799
7. The Cheat with the Ace of Diamonds
   Georges de La Tour · c. 1636–1640
8. La Grande Odalisque
   Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres · 1814
9. Baldassare Castiglione
   Raphael · c. 1514–1515
10. Pierrot, formerly called Gilles
    Jean-Antoine Watteau · c.1718 - c. 1719
11. The Virgin of Chancellor Rolin
    Jan van Eyck · c. 1430–1435
12. The Oath of the Horatii
    Jacques-Louis David · dated 1784; completed 1785
13. The Death of Sardanapalus
    Eugène Delacroix · 1827
14. Imaginary View of the Grande Galerie in Ruins
    Hubert Robert · 1796
15. The Virgin and Child in Majesty with Six Angels
    Cimabue · 1275–1300
16. La Belle Jardinière
    Raphael · 1507
17. Self-Portrait at the Easel
    Rembrandt van Rijn · 1660
18. Bathsheba at Her Bath
    Rembrandt van Rijn · 1654
19. The Ray
    Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin · 1728
20. Ship of Fools
    Hieronymus Bosch · 1475/1500

01 / 20

Mona Lisa

Leonardo da Vinci

1503–1519 · Oil on poplar panel · Musée du Louvre



Leonardo da Vinci. Portrait de Lisa Gherardini, épouse de Francesco del Giocondo, dit La Joconde ou Monna Lisa. Image credit: Leonardo da Vinci; Source credit: Cropped and relevelled from File:Mona Lisa, by Leonardo da Vinci, from C2RMF.jpg . Originally C2RMF: Galerie de tableaux en très haute définition : image page. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Proportional resize and JPEG compression; full source frame retained. · Public domain

The steadiest part of Leonardo's portrait of Lisa Gherardini is her hands, folded calmly in front of her. Her face is less definite. Around the eyes and mouth the outlines seem to dissolve into shadow, and this goes some way to explaining why her expression is so hard to pin down. The technique is called sfumato: tones are blended without a hard boundary between them. Behind her, a winding landscape grows hazier as it recedes.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: INV 779

02 / 20

The Lacemaker

Johannes Vermeer

c. 1669–1670 · Oil on canvas mounted on wood · Musée du Louvre



Johannes Vermeer. La Dentellière. Image credit: Johannes Vermeer; Source credit: Musée du Louvre. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Proportional resize and JPEG compression; full source frame retained. · Public domain

Vermeer's Lacemaker measures only about 24 by 21 centimetres. A young woman bends over her work, and her attention seems to have narrowed to her fingers and the threads. In a picture this concentrated, it is surprising how loosely Vermeer paints the threads nearest the viewer. She may not be quite what the title suggests, either. The Louvre describes her as a woman of comfortable means rather than a professional lacemaker.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: MI 1448

03 / 20

Liberty Leading the People

Eugène Delacroix

1830 · Oil on canvas · Musée du Louvre



Eugène Delacroix. Le 28 juillet 1830. La Liberté guidant le peuple. Image credit: Eugène Delacroix; Source credit: photo Shonagon 2024-05-02. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Proportional resize and JPEG compression; full source frame retained. · Public domain

The fighting here belongs to the July Revolution of 1830, not the French Revolution of 1789. Into this street battle Delacroix puts an allegorical figure. Liberty carries a real weapon and steps over corpses that look real, but her bare breast, raised flag and greater scale set her apart from the people around her. In the foreground, the dead lie across the path the living have to take.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: RF 129

04 / 20

The Raft of the Medusa

Théodore Géricault

1818–1819 · Oil on canvas · Musée du Louvre



Théodore Géricault. Le radeau de la Méduse. Image credit: Théodore Géricault; Source credit: Unknown source Unknown source. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Proportional resize and JPEG compression; full source frame retained. · Public domain

The wreck of the Medusa happened in 1816 and became a public scandal. Géricault gave this recent disaster the scale normally reserved for grand historical subjects.

The survivors' effort builds upwards, from the dead and exhausted at the front to the raised cloth at the far end of the raft. They are signalling to a ship on the horizon, and the ship is so small that their gestures towards it look almost useless.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: INV 4884

05 / 20

The Wedding at Cana

Paolo Veronese

1562–1563 · Oil on canvas · Musée du Louvre



Paul Véronèse. Les Noces de Cana. Image: WikiArt. Domaine public. Full-frame proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. · Domaine public

Christ sits near the centre, below the activity on the terrace, but he has a great deal of competition. Musicians, servants and guests fill almost ten metres of canvas, and the miracle of water turned into wine is surrounded by the business of a lavish meal.

Veronese painted the picture for the Benedictine refectory of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, so it originally faced people who were eating too. Its architecture and long tables suit that setting.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: INV 142

06 / 20

The Intervention of the Sabine Women

Jacques-Louis David

1799 · Oil on canvas · Musée du Louvre



Jacques-Louis David. Les Sabines. Image credit: Jacques-Louis David. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Proportional resize and JPEG compression; full source frame retained. · Public domain

The woman in white is Hersilia. She steps into the space where the weapons are about to meet, between her Roman husband and her Sabine father. The women have family on both sides of the conflict, and the children at their feet make that impossible to ignore. Outstretched arms hold the centre, and the armed men around them hesitate.

David had painted a divided family before. In The Oath of the Horatii, also in this selection, the grieving women are kept to one side while the men swear their oath. Here a woman takes the centre, and her interruption becomes the decisive action.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: INV 3691

07 / 20

The Cheat with the Ace of Diamonds

Georges de La Tour

c. 1636–1640 · Oil on canvas · Musée du Louvre



Georges de la Tour. The Cheat with the Ace of Diamonds. Image: WikiArt. Public domain. Full-frame proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. · Public domain

The title names the card to watch for, and the cheating is visible before the game itself makes sense. At the left, a player reaches behind his back for a card. The richly dressed young man opposite is studying his own hand. Between them, a glance and a pointing finger suggest that the others know more than he does.

Almost nothing moves. The viewer is let in on the deception with no way of stopping it, while the young man, apparently the only one at the table still in the dark, has not yet worked out what is happening.

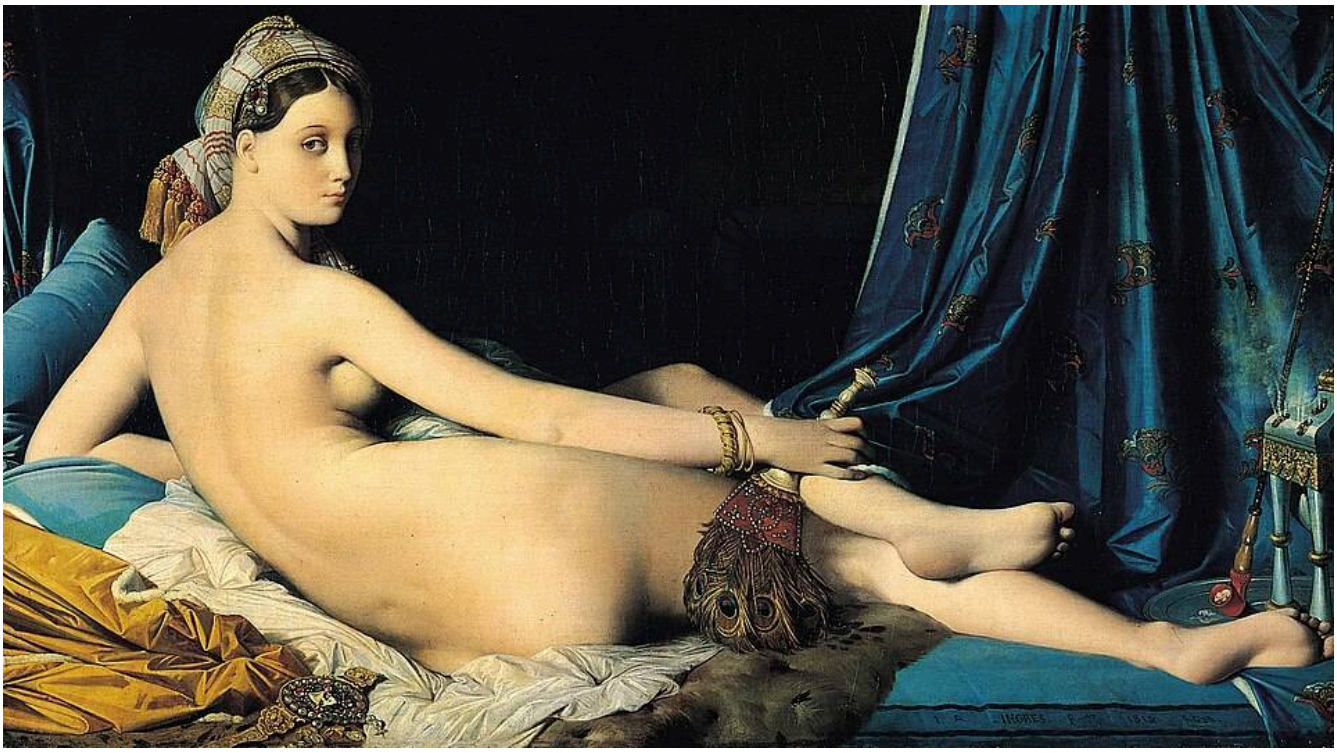
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: RF 1972 8

08 / 20

La Grande Odalisque

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres

1814 · Oil on canvas · Musée du Louvre



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. Une odalisque, dite La grande odalisque. Image credit: Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres; Source credit: wartburg.edu. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Proportional resize and JPEG compression; full source frame retained. · Public domain

The woman's back runs from shoulder to hip for longer than ordinary anatomy would allow. The line flows so smoothly into the turn of her head and the fabric around her that the distortion may not register at first.

A peacock fan, a turban and luxurious textiles set her in an imagined harem. It is a European fantasy and a poor guide to Ottoman life. The polished surface lays everything out for inspection, though the look she returns is harder to read.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: RF 1158

09 / 20

Baldassare Castiglione

Raphael

c. 1514–1515 · Musée du Louvre



Raphaël. Portrait de Baldassare Castiglione. Image: WikiArt. Domaine public. Full-frame proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. · Domaine public

Castiglione was a writer and diplomat. Raphael dresses him in grey fur, a black cap and a pale shirt, so that little competes with his face. His blue eyes meet the viewer's and his hands rest low in the frame. He makes no emphatic gesture, which seems apt for a diplomat.

The ease is carefully arranged. The shoulder turns one way and the face another, and the broad shapes of the clothes hold the figure together.

Object source · Open artwork

10 / 20

Pierrot, formerly called Gilles

Jean-Antoine Watteau

c.1718 - c. 1719 · Musée du Louvre



Antoine Watteau. Pierrot. Image: WikiArt. Domaine public. Full-frame proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. · Domaine public

The title keeps both of the figure's names: the picture was formerly called Gilles. Pierrot wears the costume of a comic performer but has very little to perform. He faces straight out with his arms hanging, and his white clothes stand out against the landscape. His companions appear lower in the picture, as if they belong to an action he has drifted away from.

It is tempting to call him sad, but his still face gives away less than that.

Object source · Open artwork

11 / 20

The Virgin of Chancellor Rolin

Jan van Eyck

c. 1430–1435 · Musée du Louvre



Jan van Eyck. La Vierge du chancelier Rolin. Image: WikiArt. Domaine public. Full-frame proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. · Domaine public

Nicolas Rolin, chancellor to the duke of Burgundy, kneels opposite the Virgin and Child as though they shared an unusually well-furnished room. His patterned robe, clasped hands and intent face are painted with as much care as the sacred figures. An angel holds a crown above Mary. Through the arches, a river runs past a crowded town, and even its small buildings are painted in detail.

The painting gives Rolin's devotion a public form, placing him for good at a meeting no ordinary visitor could attend.

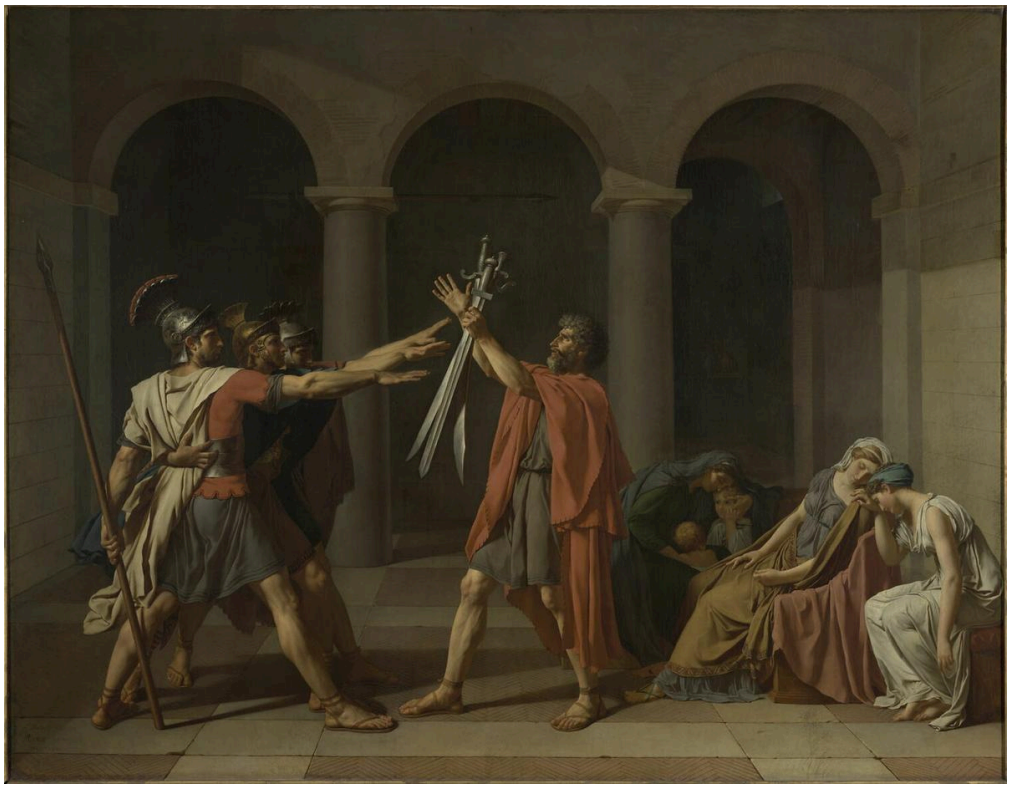
Object source · Open artwork

12 / 20

The Oath of the Horatii

Jacques-Louis David

dated 1784; completed 1785 · Musée du Louvre



Jacques-Louis David. Le Serment des Horaces. Image: WikiArt. Domaine public. Full-frame proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. · Domaine public

Three brothers stretch their arms towards the swords their father holds, and their bodies repeat the same braced movement. At the right, the seated women bend and fold towards one another. Resolve and grief occupy separate parts of the picture.

The brothers are swearing to fight for Rome. Their families are bound to the enemy as well, and the women carry the cost of the oath at home. The picture was a royal commission, finished before the French Revolution, so this call to sacrifice for the state was first painted for the crown.

Object source · Open artwork

13 / 20

The Death of Sardanapalus

Eugène Delacroix

1827 · Musée du Louvre



Eugène Delacroix. Death of Sardanapalus. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

In the story Delacroix depicts, a defeated ruler orders the destruction of the people, animals and possessions that have served him. Sardanapalus watches from the top of a red bed while the killing spreads through the room below. Around him there is struggle and resistance, and against that his stillness is chilling. Delacroix's later Liberty Leading the People also has the dead at its feet, but there a figure steps over them on her way forward.

The scene is hard to sort out. Limbs, weapons and fabrics overlap, and the diagonal of the bed leads the eye through the confusion. The luxury offers no relief, since it is among the things being destroyed.

Object source · Open artwork

14 / 20

Imaginary View of the Grande Galerie in Ruins

Hubert Robert

1796 · Musée du Louvre



Hubert Robert. Vue de la grande galerie du louvre en ruines. Image: WikiArt. Domaine public. Full-frame proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. · Domaine public

Robert's subject is the building that now holds the picture. Daylight falls through a broken vault in the Louvre's Grande Galerie, plants grow from the masonry and people move among fallen fragments. The long perspective survives, so the gallery is still recognisable without its roof.

The picture was a companion to a painted proposal for improving the same gallery, so the pair set a future for the museum's displays beside a vision of the building's decay.

Object source · Open artwork

15 / 20

The Virgin and Child in Majesty with Six Angels

Cimabue

1275–1300 · Musée du Louvre



Cimabue. The Virgin and Child in Majesty surrounded by Six Angels. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

Cimabue's panel is more than four metres high, and its design had to read across a church. The repeated figures and clear hierarchy suit that distance. The Virgin, the Child and six angels are set against gold, in a space defined by their sacred importance, yet the throne gives Mary a solid seat. The angels rise in balanced groups on either side, and their turning heads and the folds of their robes give the bodies some weight.

Object source · Open artwork

16 / 20

La Belle Jardinière

Raphael

1507 · Musée du Louvre



Raphaël. La Belle Jardinière. Image: WikiArt. Domaine public. Full-frame proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. · Domaine public

Mary looks down at the standing Christ child, while the young John the Baptist kneels with his cross. The three figures fit into a broad triangle, but their hands and the glances they exchange keep the group from hardening into a diagram. Behind them a landscape stretches out, and the sacred encounter looks like an intimate meeting in the countryside. Only John's cross brings the children's future into the scene.

Object source · Open artwork

17 / 20

Self-Portrait at the Easel

Rembrandt van Rijn

1660 · Musée du Louvre



Rembrandt. Portrait de l'artiste au chevalet. Image: WikiArt. Domaine public. Full-frame proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. · Domaine public

A white cap catches the light above Rembrandt's face. The Louvre notes that technical examination revealed an earlier, darker head covering, so that patch of light was a revision. His tools and the edge of the easel identify his trade, but most of the picture's attention goes to his unevenly lit features.

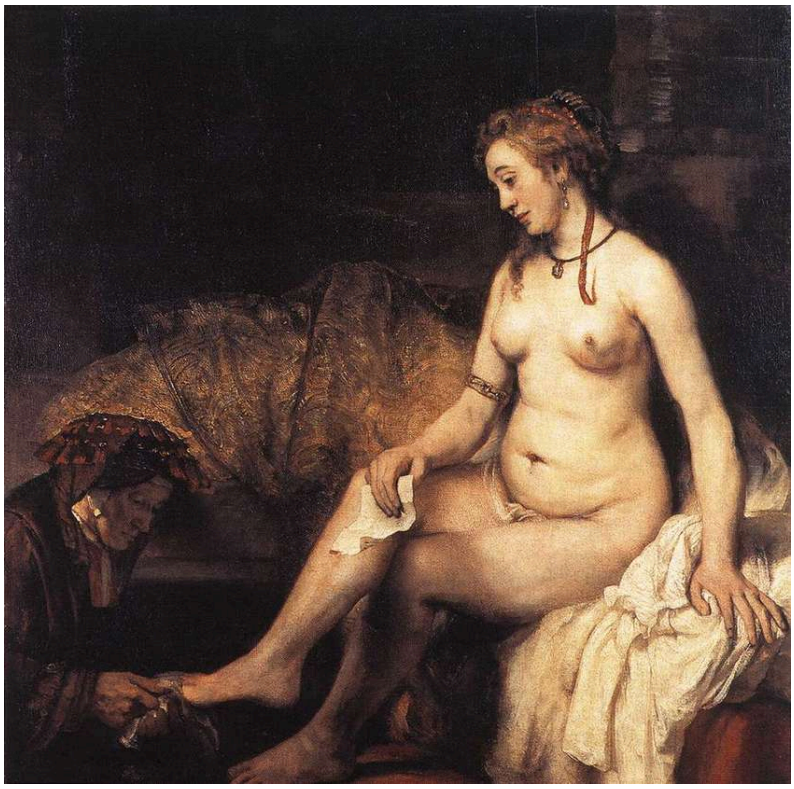
Object source · Open artwork

18 / 20

Bathsheba at Her Bath

Rembrandt van Rijn

1654 · Musée du Louvre



Rembrandt. Bethsabée au bain tenant la lettre de David. Image: WikiArt. Domaine public. Full-frame proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. · Domaine public

King David does not appear. His power enters the room through the letter Bathsheba holds while an attendant tends to her foot, and Rembrandt keeps the scene on the woman who has to receive it. Broad light falls across her body.

Her head is lowered and her hand is at rest, which slows the story down. The biblical situation is clearer than her thoughts: her expression could be read as guilt, consent or sorrow.

Object source · Open artwork

19 / 20

The Ray

Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin

1728 · Musée du Louvre



Jean Siméon Chardin. La Raie. Image: WikiArt. Domaine public. Full-frame proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. · Domaine public

For his reception piece at the Royal Academy, Chardin submitted a kitchen. A gutted ray hangs above the table with its pale underside exposed, an awkward and even unpleasant centrepiece. On the left a cat picks its way among the seafood; on the right the vessels stand more quietly. A folded white cloth links the two sides without tidying them. Wet flesh, rough skin, cloth and glazed surfaces gave him plenty to paint without any heroic story.

Object source · Open artwork

20 / 20

Ship of Fools

Hieronymus Bosch

1475/1500 · Musée du Louvre



Hieronymus Bosch. La Nef des fous. Image credit: Hieronymus Bosch; Source credit: http://www.hetnoordbrabantsmuseum.nl/english/press-jheronimus-bosch/persbeelden-eng/ Previously: www.arthistory.cc : Home : Info : Pic. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Proportional resize and JPEG compression; full source frame retained. · Public domain

The passengers eat, drink and reach for food on a boat that seems to have lost any practical purpose. A tree serves as its mast. Clerical dress gives no protection against folly, and the crowd is too taken up with its appetites to notice where it is heading.

This narrow panel is a fragment of a triptych that was later taken apart, and the other parts once helped frame its moral argument. Even its present edges are partly the result of later cutting and may not be where Bosch meant them to be.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: RF 2218

Continue in Artline

The combined timeline places the selected works beside books and events. The artist timeline shows something else: whose lives overlapped.

Before your visit

The entries follow no route through the building. To find locations, use the museum's current collection records and visitor information.

Read further

For dates, materials and bibliography, start with the object records linked with these entries. Leonardo's Treatise on Painting is a different kind of reading: a painter writing about his own craft, not a scholar writing about these pictures.

Further reading

A Treatise on Painting

Leonardo da Vinci; translated by John Francis Rigaud · Read free · English

Leonardo's notes on painting, compiled from his writings and translated into English by John Francis Rigaud. They cover observation, proportion, the body, light and perspective, and the practical decisions a painter makes.

The Louvre’s masterpieces

Musée du Louvre · Read online · Official trail

The Louvre's own route through its best-known works, with directions through the building.

Museum website · Official collection guide

Sources and visitor information checked: 2026-10-12

Artline · Louvre: Masterpieces