

**23-1** Albrecht Dürer, *Fall of Man (Adam and Eve)*, 1504. Engraving,  $9\frac{7}{8}$  ×  $7\frac{5}{8}$ . Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (centennial gift of Landon T. Clay).

Albrecht Dürer was the first Northern European artist to become an international celebrity. *Fall of Man,* with two figures based on ancient statues, reflects his studies of the Vitruvian theory of human proportions.

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# NORTHERN EUROPE AND SPAIN, 1500 TO 1600

The dissolution of the Burgundian Netherlands in 1477 led in the early 16th century to a realignment in the European geopolitical landscape (MAP 23-1). France and the Holy Roman Empire absorbed the former Burgundian territories and increased their power. But by the end of the century, through calculated marriages, military exploits, and ambitious territorial expansion, Spain was the dominant European state. Throughout the continent, monarchs gained additional prestige and cultivated a stronger sense of cultural and political unity among their subjects, thereby laying the foundation for today's European nations. Yet a momentous crisis in the Christian Church overshadowed these power shifts. Concerted attempts to reform the Church led to the Reformation and the establishment of Protestantism (as distinct from Catholicism), which in turn prompted the Catholic Church's response, the Counter-Reformation (see Chapter 22). Ultimately, the Reformation split Christendom in half and produced a hundred years of civil war between Protestants and Catholics.

Despite the tumultuous religious conflict engulfing 16th-century Europe, the exchange of intellectual and artistic ideas continued to thrive. Catholic Italy and the (mostly) Protestant Holy Roman Empire shared in a lively commerce—economic and cultural—and 16th-century art throughout Europe was a major beneficiary of that exchange. Humanism filtered up from Italy and spread throughout Northern Europe. Northern humanists, like their southern counterparts, cultivated a knowledge of classical cultures and literature. Because they focused more on reconciling humanism with Christianity, later scholars applied the general label "Christian humanists" to describe them.

Among the most influential Christian humanists were the Dutch-born Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536) and the Englishman Thomas More (1478–1535). Erasmus demonstrated his interest in both Italian humanism and religion with his "philosophy of Christ," emphasizing education and scriptural knowledge. Both an ordained priest and avid scholar, Erasmus published his most famous essay, *The Praise of Folly*, in 1509. In this widely read work, he satirized not just the Church but various social classes as well. His ideas were to play an important role in the development of the Reformation, but he consistently declined to join any of the Reformation sects. Equally well educated was Thomas More, who served King Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547). Henry eventually ordered More executed because of his

MAP 23-1 Europe in the early 16th century.



opposition to England's break with the Catholic Church. In France, François Rabelais (ca. 1494–1553), a former monk who advocated rejecting stagnant religious dogmatism, disseminated the humanist spirit.

The turmoil emerging during the 16th century lasted well into the 17th century and permanently affected the face of Europe. The concerted challenges to established authority and the persistent philosophical inquiry eventually led to the rise of new political systems (for example, the nation-state) and new economic systems (such as capitalism).

#### HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

Although at the opening of the 16th century many in the Holy Roman Empire were expressing dissatisfaction with the Church in Rome, Martin Luther had not yet posted the *Ninety-five Theses* that launched the Protestant Reformation. The Catholic clergy in Germany still offered artists important commissions to adorn churches and other religious institutions.

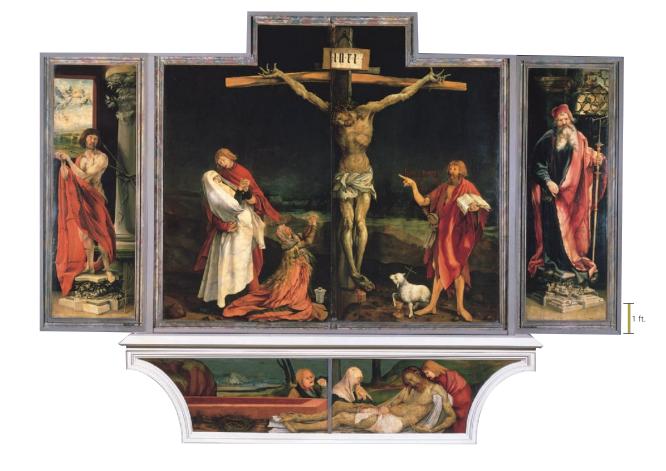
MATTHIAS GRÜNEWALD Matthias Neithardt, known conventionally as MATTHIAS GRÜNEWALD (ca. 1480–1528), worked for the archbishops of Mainz from 1511 on in several capacities, from court painter and decorator to architect, hydraulic engineer, and superintendent of works. Grünewald eventually moved to northern Germany, where he settled at Halle in Saxony. Around 1510, he began work on the *Isenheim Altarpiece* (FIG. 23-2), a complex and fascinating monument that reflects Catholic beliefs and incorporates several references to Catholic doctrines, such as the lamb (symbol of the Son of God), whose wound spurts blood into a chalice in the *Crucifixion* scene (FIG. 23-2, *top*) on the exterior of the altarpiece.

Created for the monastic hospital order Saint Anthony of Isenheim, the *Isenheim Altarpiece* consists of a wooden shrine (carved by

NIKOLAUS HAGENAUER in 1490) that includes gilded and polychromed statues of Saints Anthony Abbot, Augustine, and Jerome (FIG. 23-2, bottom) in addition to Grünewald's two pairs of movable wings that open at the center. Hinged together at the sides, one pair stands directly behind the other. Grünewald painted the exterior panels of the first pair (visible when the altarpiece is closed, FIG. 23-2, top) between 1510 and 1515: Crucifixion in the center, Saint Sebastian on the left, Saint Anthony on the right, and Lamentation in the predella. When these exterior wings are open, four additional scenes (not illustrated)—Annunciation, Angelic Concert, Madonna and Child, and Resurrection—appear. Opening this second pair of wings exposes Hagenauer's interior shrine, flanked by Grünewald's panels depicting Meeting of Saints Anthony and Paul and Temptation of Saint Anthony (FIG. 23-2, bottom).

The placement of this altarpiece in the choir of a church adjacent to the monastery hospital dictated much of the imagery. Saints associated with the plague and other diseases and with miraculous cures, such as Saints Anthony and Sebastian, appear prominently in the *Isenheim Altarpiece*. Grünewald's panels specifically address the themes of dire illness and miraculous healing and accordingly emphasize the suffering of the order's patron saint, Anthony. The painted images served as warnings, encouraging increased devotion from monks and hospital patients. They also functioned therapeutically by offering some hope to the afflicted. Indeed, Saint Anthony's legend encompassed his role as both vengeful dispenser of justice (by inflicting disease) and benevolent healer. Grünewald brilliantly used color to enhance the impact of the altarpiece. He intensified the contrast of horror and hope by playing subtle tones and soft harmonies against shocking dissonance of color.

One of the most memorable scenes is *Temptation of Saint Anthony* (FIG. 23-2, *bottom right*). It is a terrifying image of the five temptations, depicted as an assortment of ghoulish and bestial creatures in a dark landscape, attacking the saint. In the foreground, Grünewald





**23-2** Matthias Grünewald, *Isenheim Altarpiece* (closed, *top*; open, *bottom*), from the chapel of the Hospital of Saint Anthony, Isenheim, Germany, ca. 1510–1515. Oil on wood, 9'  $9\frac{1}{2}'' \times 10'$  9" (center panel), 8'  $2\frac{1}{2}'' \times 3' \frac{1}{2}''$  (each wing), 2'  $5\frac{1}{2}'' \times 11'$  2" (predella). Shrine carved by Nikolaus Hagenauer in 1490. Painted and gilt limewood, 9'  $9\frac{1}{2}'' \times 10'$  9". Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar.

Befitting its setting in a monastic hospital, Matthias Grünewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece* includes painted panels depicting suffering and disease but also miraculous healing, hope, and salvation.

painted a grotesque image of a man, whose oozing boils, withered arm, and distended stomach all suggest a horrible disease. Medical experts have connected these symptoms with ergotism (a disease caused by ergot, a fungus that grows especially on rye). Although doctors did not discover the cause of ergotism until about 1600, people lived in fear of its recognizable symptoms (convulsions and gangrene). The public referred to this illness as "Saint Anthony's Fire," and it was one of the major diseases treated at the Isenheim hospital. The gangrene often compelled amputation, and scholars have noted that the two movable halves of the altarpiece's predella (FIG. 23-2, *top*), if slid apart, make it appear as if Christ's legs have been amputated. The same observation can be made with regard to the two main exterior panels. Due to the off-center placement of the cross, opening the left panel "severs" one arm from the crucified figure.

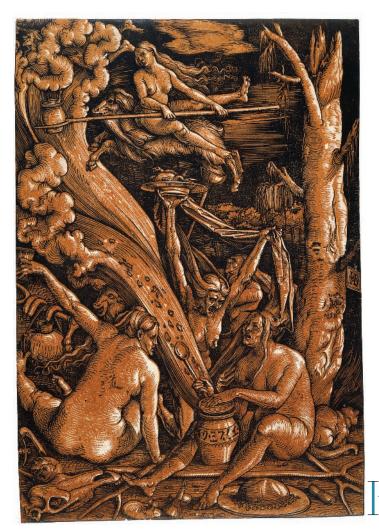
Thus, Grünewald carefully selected and presented his altarpiece's iconography to be particularly meaningful for viewers at this hospital. In the interior shrine, the artist balanced the horrors of the disease and the punishments that awaited those who did not repent with scenes such as *Meeting of Saints Anthony and Paul*, depicting the two saints, healthy and aged, conversing peacefully. Even the exterior panels (the closed altarpiece; FIG. 23-2, *top*) convey these same concerns. *Crucifixion* emphasizes Christ's pain and suffering, but the knowledge that this act redeemed humanity tempers the misery. In addition, Saint Anthony appears in the right wing as a devout follower of Christ who, like Christ and for Christ, endured intense suffering for his faith. Saint Anthony's presence on the exterior thus reinforces the themes Grünewald intertwined throughout this entire altarpiece—themes of pain, illness, and death, as well as those of hope, comfort, and salvation.

HANS BALDUNG GRIEN Very different in size, technique, and subject, but equally dramatic, is *Witches' Sabbath* (FIG. 23-3), a *chiaroscuro woodcut* that Hans Baldung Grien (ca. 1484–1545) produced in 1510. Chiaroscuro woodcuts were a recent German innovation. The technique requires the use of two blocks of wood instead of one. The printmaker carves and inks one block in the usual way in order to produce a traditional black-and-white print (see "Woodcuts, Engravings, and Etchings," Chapter 20, page 537). Then the artist cuts a second block consisting of broad highlights that can be inked in gray or color and printed over the first block's impression. Chiaroscuro woodcuts therefore incorporate some of the qualities of painting and feature tonal subtleties absent in traditional woodcuts.

Witchcraft was a counter-religion in the 15th and 16th centuries that involved magical rituals, secret potions, and devil worship. Witches prepared brews that they inhaled or rubbed into their skin, sending them into hallucinogenic trances in which they allegedly flew through the night sky on broomsticks or goats. The popes condemned all witches, and Church inquisitors vigorously pursued these demonic heretics and subjected them to torture to wrest confessions from them. Witchcraft fascinated Baldung, and he turned to the subject repeatedly. For him and his contemporaries, witches were evil forces in the world, threats to man—as was Eve herself, whom Baldung also frequently depicted as a temptress responsible for Original Sin.

In Witches' Sabbath, Baldung depicted a night scene in a forest in which a coven of nude witches—both young seductresses and old hags—gathers around a covered jar from which a fuming concoction escapes into the air. One young witch rides through the night sky on a goat. She sits backward—Baldung's way of suggesting that witchcraft is the inversion of the true religion, Christianity.

**ALBRECHT DÜRER** The dominant artist of the early 16th century in the Holy Roman Empire was Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) of Nuremberg. Dürer was the first artist outside Italy to become an



**23-3** Hans Baldung Grien, *Witches' Sabbath*, 1510. Chiaroscuro woodcut, 1'  $2\frac{7}{8}$ "  $\times$   $10\frac{1}{4}$ ". British Museum, London.

Baldung's chiaroscuro woodcut depicts witches gathered around a secret potion. One witch on a goat flies through the night sky mounted backward—suggesting witchcraft is the inversion of Christianity.

international celebrity. He traveled extensively, visiting and studying in Colmar, Basel, Strasbourg, Venice, Antwerp, and Brussels, among other locales. As a result of these travels, Dürer met many of the leading humanists and artists of his time, including Erasmus of Rotterdam and the Venetian master Giovanni Bellini (FIGS. 22-33 and 22-34). A man of exceptional talents and tremendous energy, Dürer achieved widespread fame in his own time and has enjoyed a lofty reputation ever since.

Fascinated with classical ideas as passed along by Italian Renaissance artists, Dürer was among the first Northern European artists to travel to Italy expressly to study Italian art and its underlying theories at their source. After his first journey in 1494–1495 (the second was in 1505–1506), he incorporated many Italian Renaissance developments into his art. Art historians have acclaimed Dürer as the first Northern European artist to understand fully the basic aims of the Renaissance in Italy. Like Leonardo da Vinci, Dürer wrote theoretical treatises on a variety of subjects, such as perspective, fortification, and the ideal in human proportions. Unlike Leonardo, he both finished and published his writings. Dürer also was the first Northern European artist to leave a record of his life and career through several self-portraits, through his correspondence, and through a carefully kept, quite detailed, and eminently readable diary.



**23-4** Albrecht Dürer, *Great Piece of Turf*, 1503. Watercolor,  $1' 3\frac{3}{4}'' \times 1' \frac{3}{8}''$ . Albertina, Vienna.

Albrecht Dürer, who visited Italy twice, shared Leonardo da Vinci's belief that sight reveals scientific truth. Botanists have been able to identify each plant and grass variety in this watercolor.

GREAT PIECE OF TURF Dürer allied himself with Leonardo's scientific studies when he painted an extremely precise watercolor study of a piece of turf (FIG. 23-4). For both artists, observation yielded truth. Sight, sanctified by mystics such as Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) and artists such as Jan van Eyck (see Chapter 20), became the secularized instrument of modern knowledge. Dürer agreed with Aristotle (and Leonardo) that "sight is the noblest sense of man." Nature holds the beautiful, Dürer said, for the artist who has the insight to extract it. Thus, beauty lies even in humble, perhaps ugly, things, and the ideal, which bypasses or improves on nature, may not be truly beautiful in the end. Disordered and ordinary nature might be a reasonable object of an artist's interest, quite as much as its composed and measured aspect. The remarkable Great Piece of Turf is as scientifically accurate as it is poetic. Botanists can distinguish each plant and grass variety—dandelions, great plantain, yarrow, meadow grass, and heath rush. "[D]epart not from nature according to your fancy," Dürer said, "imagining to find aught better by yourself; . . . For verily 'art' is embedded in nature; he who can extract it, has it."2

FALL OF MAN Dürer's fame in his own day, as today, rested more on his achievements as a printmaker than as a painter. Trained as a goldsmith by his father before he took up painting and printmaking, he developed an extraordinary proficiency in handling the burin, the engraving tool. This technical ability, combined with a feeling for the form-creating possibilities of line, enabled him to produce a body of

graphic work in woodcut (FIG. I-8) and engraving (FIGS. 23-1 and 23-5) that few artists have rivaled for quality and number. Dürer created numerous book illustrations. He also circulated and sold prints in single sheets, which people of ordinary means could buy, expanding his audience considerably. Aggressively marketing his prints with the aid of an agent, Dürer became a wealthy man from the sale of these works. His wife, who served as his manager, and his mother also sold his prints at markets. Through his graphic works, he exerted strong influence throughout Europe (Hans Baldung Grien trained in Dürer's workshop), especially in Flanders but also in Italy. The lawsuit Dürer brought in 1506 against an Italian artist for copying his prints reveals his business acumen. Scholars generally regard this lawsuit as the first in history over artistic copyright.

An engraving, Fall of Man (Adam and Eve; FIG. 23-1), one of Dürer's early masterpieces, represents the first distillation of his studies of the Vitruvian theory of human proportions, a theory based on arithmetic ratios. Clearly outlined against the dark background of a northern forest, the two idealized figures of Adam and Eve stand in poses reminiscent of specific classical statues probably known to Dürer through graphic representations. Preceded by numerous geometric drawings in which the artist attempted to systematize sets of ideal human proportions in balanced contrapposto poses, the final print presents Dürer's concept of the "perfect" male and female figures. Yet he tempered this idealization with naturalism, demonstrating his well-honed observational skills in his rendering of the background foliage and animals. The gnarled bark of the trees and the feathery leaves authenticate the scene, as do the various creatures skulking underfoot. The animals populating the print are symbolic. The choleric cat, the melancholic elk, the sanguine rabbit, and the phlegmatic ox represent humanity's temperaments based on the "four humors," body fluids that were the basis of theories of the human body's function developed by the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates and practiced in medieval physiology. The tension between cat and mouse in the foreground symbolizes the relation between Adam and Eve at the crucial moment in Fall of Man.

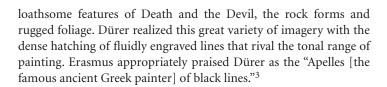
KNIGHT, DEATH, AND THE DEVIL Dürer's lifelong interest in both idealization and naturalism surfaces again in Knight, Death, and the Devil (FIG. 23-5), in which he carried the art of engraving to the highest degree of excellence. Dürer used his burin to render differences in texture and tonal values that would be difficult to match even in the much more flexible medium of etching, which artists developed later in the century (see "Woodcuts, Engravings, and Etchings," Chapter 20, page 537). Knight, Death, and the Devil depicts a mounted armored knight who rides fearlessly through a foreboding landscape. Accompanied by his faithful retriever, the knight represents a Christian knight—a soldier of God. Armed with his faith, this warrior can repel the threats of Death, who appears as a crowned decaying cadaver wreathed with snakes and shaking an hourglass as a reminder of time and mortality. The knight is equally impervious to the Devil, a pathetically hideous horned creature who follows him. The knight triumphs because he has "put on the whole armor of God that [he] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil," as urged in Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (Eph. 6:11).

The monumental knight and his mount display the strength, movement, and proportions of the Italian Renaissance equestrian statue. Dürer was familiar with Donatello's *Gattamelata* (FIG. 21-15) and Verrocchio's *Bartolommeo Colleoni* (FIG. 21-16) and had copied a number of Leonardo's sketches of horses. Dürer based the engraving on his observation of the real world, however, not other artworks, as seen in his meticulous rendering of myriad details—the knight's armor and weapons, the horse's anatomy, the textures of the



**23-5** ALBRECHT DÜRER, *Knight, Death, and the Devil*, 1513. Engraving,  $9\frac{5}{8}'' \times 7\frac{3}{8}''$ . Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Dürer's Christian knight, armed with his faith, rides fearlessly through a meticulously rendered landscape, challenging both Death and the Devil. The engraving rivals the tonal range of painting.



FOUR APOSTLES Dürer was a phenomenally gifted artist. His impressive technical facility with different media extended also to oil painting. Four Apostles (FIG. 23-6) is a two-panel oil painting he produced without commission and presented to the city fathers of Nuremberg in 1526 to be hung in the city hall. Saints John and Peter appear on the left panel, Mark and Paul on the right. In addition to showcasing Dürer's mastery of the oil technique, of his brilliant use of color and light and shade, and of his ability to imbue the four saints with individual personalities and portraitlike features, Four Apostles documents Dürer's support for the German theologian Martin Luther (1483–1546), who sparked the Protestant Reformation. Dürer conveyed his Lutheran sympathies by his positioning of the figures. He relegated Saint Peter (as representative of the pope in Rome) to a secondary role by placing him behind John the Evangelist. John assumed particular prominence for Luther because of the evangelist's focus on Christ's person in his Gospel. In addition, Peter and John both read from the Bible, the single authoritative source of religious truth, according to Luther. Dürer emphasized the Bible's centrality by depicting it open to the passage "In the beginning was the Word, and





**23-6** Albrecht Dürer, *Four Apostles*, 1526. Oil on wood, each panel 7'  $1'' \times 2'$  6''. Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

Dürer's support for Lutheranism surfaces in his portraitlike depictions of four saints on two painted panels. Peter, representative of the pope in Rome, plays a secondary role behind John the Evangelist.

the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). At the bottom of the panels, Dürer included quotations from each of the four apostles' books, using Luther's German translation. The excerpts warn against the coming of perilous times and the preaching of false prophets who will distort God's word.

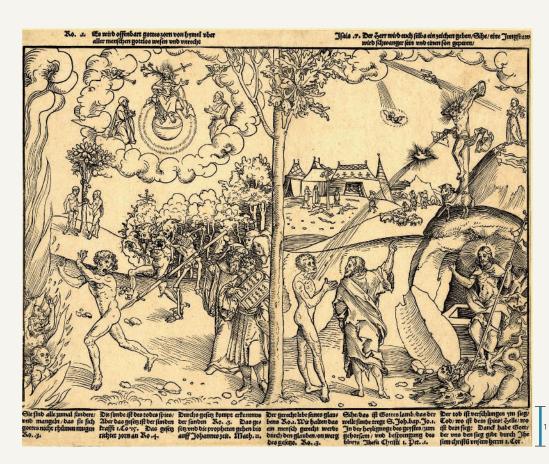
LUTHER AND THE REFORMATION The Protestant Reformation, which came to fruition in the early 16th century, had its roots in long-term, growing dissatisfaction with Church leadership. The deteriorating relationship between the faithful and the Church hierarchy stood as an obstacle for the millions who sought a meaningful religious experience. Particularly damaging was the perception that the Roman popes concerned themselves more with temporal power and material wealth than with the salvation of Church members. The fact that many 15th-century popes and cardinals came from wealthy families, such as the Medici, intensified this perception. It was not only those at the highest levels who seemed to ignore their spiritual duties. Upper-level clergy (such as archbishops, bishops, and abbots) began to accumulate numerous offices, thereby increasing their revenues but also making it more difficult for them to fulfill all of their responsibilities. By 1517 dissatisfaction with the Church had grown so widespread that Luther felt free to challenge papal authority openly by posting in Wittenberg his Ninety-five Theses, in which he enumerated his objections to Church practices, especially the sale of indulgences. Indulgences were Church-sanctioned remittances (or reductions) of

#### **Catholic and Protestant Views of Salvation**

central concern of the Protestant reformers was the question of how Christians achieve salvation. Martin Luther did not perceive salvation as something for which weak and sinful humans must constantly strive through good deeds performed under the watchful eye of a punitive God. Instead, he argued, faithful individuals attained redemption solely by God's bestowal of his grace. Therefore, people cannot earn salvation. Further, no ecclesiastical machinery with all its miraculous rites and indulgent forgivenesses could save sinners face-to-face with God. Only absolute faith in Christ could justify sinners and ensure salvation. Justification by faith alone, with the guidance of scripture, was the fundamental doctrine of Protestantism.

In *Allegory of Law and Grace* (FIG. 23-7), Lucas Cranach the Elder gave pictorial form to these doctrinal differences between Protestantism and Catholicism. Cranach was a follower and close friend of Martin Luther. (They were godfathers to each other's children.) Many scholars, in fact, call Cranach "the painter of the Reformation." Cranach produced his allegorical woodcut about a dozen years after

Luther set the Reformation in motion with his Ninety-five Theses. In Allegory of Law and Grace, Cranach depicted the differences between Catholicism (based on Old Testament law, according to Luther) and Protestantism (based on a belief in God's grace) in two images separated by a centrally placed tree. On the left half, Judgment Day has arrived, as represented by Christ's appearance at the top of the scene, hovering amid a cloud halo and accompanied by angels and saints. Christ raises his left hand in the traditional gesture of damnation, and, below, a skeleton drives off a terrified person to burn for eternity in Hell. This person tried to live a good and honorable life, but despite his efforts, he fell short. Moses stands to the side, holding the Tablets of the Law—the commandments Catholics follow in their attempt to attain salvation. In contrast to this Catholic reliance on good works and clean living, Protestants emphasized God's grace as the source of redemption. Accordingly, God showers the sinner in the right half of the print with grace, as streams of blood flow from the crucified Christ. On the far right, Christ emerges from the tomb and promises salvation to all who believe in him.



**23-7** LUCAS CRANACH THE ELDER, Allegory of Law and Grace, ca. 1530. Woodcut,  $10\frac{5}{8}'' \times 1'\frac{3}{4}''$ . British Museum, London.

Lucas Cranach was a close friend of Martin Luther, whose *Ninety-five Theses* launched the Reformation in 1517. In this woodcut Cranach contrasted Catholic and Protestant views of how to achieve salvation.

time spent in Purgatory. The increasing frequency of their sale suggested that people were buying their way into Heaven.

Luther's goal was significant reform and clarification of major spiritual issues, but his ideas ultimately led to the splitting of Christendom. According to Luther, the Catholic Church's extensive ecclesiastical structure needed to be cast out, for it had no basis in scripture. Only the Bible—nothing else—could serve as the foundation

for Christianity. Luther declared the pope the Antichrist (for which the pope excommunicated him), called the Church the "whore of Babylon," and denounced ordained priests. He also rejected most of Catholicism's sacraments, decrying them as pagan obstacles to salvation (see "Catholic and Protestant Views of Salvation," above, and FIG. 23-7). Luther maintained that for Christianity to be restored to its original purity, the Church must be cleansed of all the doctrinal

#### ART AND SOCIETY

#### Protestantism and Iconoclasm

The Protestant concern over the role of religious imagery at times progressed to outright *iconoclasm*—the objection to and destruction of religious imagery (see "Icons and Iconoclasm," Chapter 12, page 326). In encouraging a more personal relationship with God, Protestant leaders spoke out against much of the religious art being produced. In his 1525 tract *Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments*, Martin Luther explained his attitude toward religious imagery:

I approached the task of destroying images by first tearing them out of the heart through God's Word and making them worthless and despised. . . . For when they are no longer in the heart, they can do no harm when seen with the eyes. . . . I have allowed and not forbidden the outward removal of images. . . . And I say at the outset that according to the law of Moses no other images are forbidden than an image of God which one worships. A crucifix, on the other hand, or any other holy image is not forbidden.\*

Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531), leader of the Zwinglians (a Protestant sect based in Switzerland), concurred with Luther and cautioned his followers about the potentially dangerous nature of religious imagery. Although Zwingli's ideas had much in common with those of Luther, he was more intent than Luther on simplifying religious belief and practices and rejected all sacraments (unlike Luther, who accepted both baptism and communion).

The Protestant Ten Commandments, which, although also excerpted from the Bible, differ slightly from those of the Catholic Church, further reinforced the Protestant condemnation of possibly idolatrous religious imagery. For Protestants, this is the Second Commandment:

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them, for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me. And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

These many Protestant proscriptions against religious imagery often led to eruptions of iconoclasm. Particularly violent waves of iconoclastic fervor swept Basel, Zurich, Strasbourg, and Wittenberg in the 1520s. In an episode known as the Great Iconoclasm, bands of Calvinists visited Catholic churches in the Netherlands in 1566, shattering stained-glass windows, smashing statues, and destroying paintings and other artworks that they perceived as idolatrous. These strong reactions to art not only reflect the religious fervor of the time but also serve as dramatic demonstrations of the power of art—and of how much art mattered.

\* Translated by Bernhard Erling, in Wolfgang Stechow, *Northern Renaissance Art* 1400–1600: Sources and Documents (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1966), 129–130.

impurities that had collected through the ages. Luther advocated the Bible as the source of all religious truth. The Bible—the sole scriptural authority—was the word of God, and the Church's councils, law, and rituals carried no weight. Luther facilitated the lay public's access to biblical truths by producing the first translation of the Bible in a vernacular language. Luther's teachings found visual expression in *Allegory of Law and Grace* (FIG. 23-7) by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472–1553).

VISUAL IMAGERY AND THE REFORMATION In addition to doctrinal differences, Catholics and Protestants took divergent stances on the role of visual imagery in religion. Catholics embraced church decoration as an aid to communicating with God, as seen in Italian ceiling frescoes (FIG. 22-1; see "Religious Art in Counter-Reformation Italy," Chapter 22, page 596) and German and Polish altarpieces (FIGS. 20-18, 20-19, and 23-2). In contrast, Protestants believed such imagery could lead to idolatry and would distract viewers from focusing on the real reason for their presence in church—to communicate directly with God (see "Protestantism and Iconoclasm," above). Because of this belief, Protestant churches were relatively austere and unadorned, and the extensive church decoration programs found especially in Italy were not as prominent in Protestant churches. This does not suggest that Protestants had no use for visual images. Art, especially prints (which were inexpensive and easily circulated), was a useful and effective teaching tool and facilitated the private devotional exercises that were fundamental to Protestantism. The popularity of prints both contributed to and

received impetus from the transition from handwritten manuscripts to print media in Northern Europe during the 16th century.

ALBRECHT ALTDORFER Some 16th-century artists in the Holy Roman Empire addressed historical and political issues in their work. Albrecht Altdorfer (ca. 1480-1538), for example, painted Battle of Issus (FIG. 23-8) in 1529, a depiction of Alexander the Great's defeat of King Darius III of Persia in 333 BCE at a town called Issus on the Pinarus River. Altdorfer announced the subject (which the Greek painter Philoxenos of Eretria [FIG. 5-70] had represented two millennia before) in the Latin inscription that hangs in the sky. The duke of Bavaria, Wilhelm IV (r. 1508–1550), commissioned Battle of Issus at the commencement of his military campaign against the invading Turks. The parallels between the historical and contemporary conflicts were no doubt significant to the duke. Both involved societies that deemed themselves progressive as being engaged in battles against infidels—the Persians in antiquity and the Turks in 1528. Altdorfer reinforced this connection by attiring the figures in 16thcentury armor and depicting them embroiled in contemporary military alignments.

The scene also reveals Altdorfer's love of landscape. The battle takes place in an almost cosmological setting. From a bird's-eye view, the clashing armies swarm in the foreground. In the distance, craggy mountain peaks rise next to still bodies of water. Amid swirling clouds, a blazing sun descends. Although the spectacular topography may appear imaginary or invented, Altdorfer derived his depiction of the landscape from maps. Specifically, he set the scene



**23-8** Albrecht Altdorfer, *Battle of Issus*, 1529. Oil on wood, 5'  $2\frac{1}{4}$ "  $\times$  3'  $11\frac{1}{4}$ ". Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

Interweaving history and 16th-century politics, Albrecht Altdorfer painted Alexander the Great's defeat of the Persians for a patron who had just embarked on a military campaign against the Turks.

in the eastern Mediterranean with a view from Greece to the Nile in Egypt. In addition, Altdorfer may have acquired his information about this battle from the German scholar Johannes Aventinus (1477–1534). In his account, Aventinus described the bloody daylong battle and Alexander's ultimate victory. Appropriately, given Alexander's designation as the "sun god," the sun sets over the victorious Greeks on the right, while a small crescent moon (a symbol of the Near East) hovers in the upper left corner over the retreating Persians.

**HANS HOLBEIN** Choosing less dramatic scenes, Hans Holbein the Younger (ca. 1497–1543) excelled as a portraitist. Trained by his

father, Holbein produced portraits reflecting the Northern European tradition of close realism that had emerged in 15th-century Flemish art (see Chapter 20). Yet he also incorporated Italian ideas about monumental composition and sculpturesque form. The surfaces of his paintings are as lustrous as enamel, his detail is exact and exquisitely drawn, and his contrasts of light and dark are never heavy.

Holbein began his artistic career in Basel, where he knew Erasmus of Rotterdam. Because of the immediate threat of a religious civil war in Basel, Erasmus suggested that Holbein leave for England and gave him a recommendation to Thomas More, chancellor of England under Henry VIII. Holbein did move and became painter to the English court. While there, he produced a superb double portrait of the French



**23-9** Hans Holbein the Younger, *The French Ambassadors*, 1533. Oil and tempera on wood,  $6' 8'' \times 6' 9\frac{1}{2}''$ . National Gallery, London.

In this double portrait, Holbein depicted two humanists with a collection of objects reflective of their worldliness and learning, but he also included an anamorphic skull, a reminder of death.

ambassadors to England, Jean de Dinteville (at *left*) and Georges de Selve. *The French Ambassadors* (FIG. **23-9**) exhibits Holbein's considerable talents—his strong sense of composition, his subtle linear patterning, his gift for portraiture, his marvelous sensitivity to color, and his faultlessly firm technique. The two men, both ardent humanists, stand at opposite ends of a side table covered with an oriental rug and a collection of objects reflective of their worldliness and their interest in learning and the arts. These include mathematical and astronomical models and implements, a lute with a broken string, compasses, a sundial, flutes, globes, and an open hymnbook with Luther's translation of *Veni, Creator Spiritus* and of the Ten Commandments.

Of particular interest is the long gray shape that slashes diagonally across the picture plane and interrupts the stable, balanced, and serene composition. This form is an *anamorphic image*, a distorted image recognizable only when viewed with a special device, such as a cylindrical mirror, or by looking at the painting at an acute angle. In this case, if the viewer stands off to the right, the gray slash becomes a skull. Although scholars do not agree on the skull's meaning, at the very least it certainly refers to death. Artists commonly incorporated skulls into paintings as reminders of mortality. Indeed, Holbein depicted a skull on the metal medallion on Jean de Dinteville's hat. Holbein may have intended the skulls, in conjunction with the cruci-

fix that appears half hidden behind the curtain in the upper left corner, to encourage viewers to ponder death and resurrection.

This painting may also allude to the growing tension between secular and religious authorities. Jean de Dinteville was a titled landowner, Georges de Selve a bishop. The inclusion of Luther's translations next to the lute with the broken string (a symbol of discord) may subtly refer to this religious strife. Despite scholars' uncertainty about the precise meaning of *The French Ambassadors*, it is a painting of supreme artistic achievement. Holbein rendered the still-life objects with the same meticulous care as the men themselves, the woven design of the deep emerald curtain behind them, and the floor tiles, constructed in faultless perspective. He surely hoped this painting's elegance and virtuosity of skill (produced shortly after Holbein arrived in England) would impress Henry VIII.

#### **FRANCE**

As *The French Ambassadors* illustrates, France in the early 16th century continued its efforts to secure widespread recognition as a political power and cultural force. The French kings were major patrons of art and architecture.



**23-10** JEAN CLOUET, *Francis I*, ca. 1525–1530. Tempera and oil on wood, 3'  $2'' \times 2'$  5''. Louvre, Paris.

Clouet's portrait of Francis I in elegant garb reveals the artist's attention to detail but also the flattening of features and disproportion between head and body, giving the painting a formalized quality.

**FRANCIS I** Under the rule of Francis I (r. 1515–1547), the French established a firm foothold in Milan and its environs. Francis waged a campaign (known as the Habsburg-Valois Wars) against Charles V (the Spanish king and Holy Roman Emperor; r. 1516–1558), which occupied him from 1521 to 1544. These wars involved disputed territories—southern France, the Netherlands, the Rhinelands, northern Spain, and Italy—and reflected France's central role in the shifting geopolitical landscape.

The French king also took a strong position in the religious controversies of his day. By the mid-16th century, the split between Catholics and Protestants had become so pronounced that subjects often felt compelled either to accept the religion of their sovereign or to emigrate to a territory where the sovereign's religion corresponded with their own. France was predominantly Catholic, and in 1534 Francis declared Protestantism illegal. The state persecuted its Protestants, the Huguenots, and drove them underground. The Huguenots' commitment to Protestantism eventually led to one of the bloodiest religious massacres in European history when the Protestants and Catholics clashed in Paris on August 24, 1572, with the violence quickly spreading throughout France.

Francis I also endeavored to elevate his country's cultural profile. To that end, he invited several esteemed Italian artists, including Leonardo da Vinci, to his court. Francis's attempt to glorify the state and himself meant the religious art that dominated the Middle Ages no longer prevailed, for the king and not the Christian Church held the power.

The portrait (FIG. 23-10) Jean Clouet (ca. 1485–1541) painted of Francis I about a decade after he became king shows a worldly ruler magnificently bedecked in silks and brocades, wearing a gold chain with a medallion of the Order of Saint Michael, a French order Louis XI founded in 1469. Legend has it that the "merry monarch" was a great lover and the hero of hundreds of "gallant" deeds. Appropriately, he appears suave and confident, with his hand resting on the pommel of a dagger. Despite the careful detail, the portrait also exhibits an elegantly formalized quality, the result of Clouet's suppression of modeling, which flattens features, seen particularly in Francis's neck. The disproportion between the king's small head and his broad body, swathed in heavy layers of fabric, adds to the formalized nature.

Francis and his court favored art that was at once elegant, erotic, and unorthodox. Appropriately, Mannerism appealed to them most, and Francis thus brought Benvenuto Cellini (FIG. 22-51) to France with the promise of a lucrative retainer (see Chapter 22). He also put two prominent Florentine Mannerists—Rosso Fiorentino and Francesco Primaticcio—in charge of decorating the new royal palace at Fontainebleau.

## **23-11** Château de Chambord, Chambord, France, begun 1519.

French Renaissance châteaux, which developed from medieval castles, served as country houses for royalty. King Francis I's Château de Chambord reflects Italian palazzo design but features a Gothic roof.



CHÂTEAU DE CHAMBORD Francis I indulged his passion for building by commissioning several large châteaux, among them the Château de Chambord (FIG. 23-11). Reflecting more peaceful times, these châteaux, developed from medieval castles, served as country houses for royalty, who usually built them near forests for use as hunting lodges. Construction of Chambord began in 1519, but Francis I never saw its completion. Chambord's plan, originally drawn by a pupil of Giuliano da Sangallo, includes a central square block with four corridors, in the shape of a cross, and a broad, central staircase that gives access to groups of rooms—ancestors of the modern suite of rooms or apartments. At each of the four corners, a round tower punctuates the square plan, and a moat surrounds the whole. From the exterior, Chambord presents a carefully contrived horizontal accent on three levels, with continuous moldings separating its floors. Windows align precisely, one exactly over another. The Italian Renaissance palazzo served as the model for this matching of horizontal and verti-

cal features, but above the third level the structure's lines break chaotically into a jumble of high dormers, chimneys, and lanterns that recall soaring ragged Gothic silhouettes on the skyline.

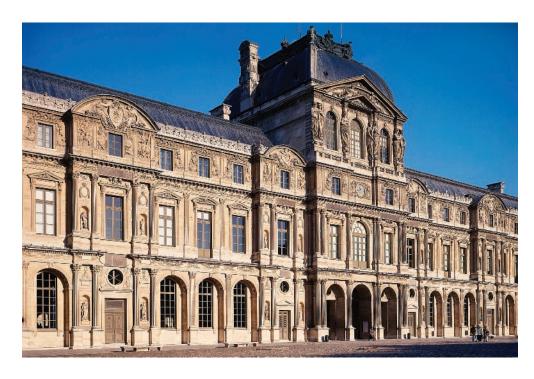
LOUVRE, PARIS Chambord essentially retains French architectural characteristics. During the reign of Francis's successor, Henry II (r. 1547–1559), however, translations of Italian architectural treatises appeared, and Italian architects themselves came to work in France.

### **23-12** PIERRE LESCOT, west wing of the Cour Carré (Square Court) of the Louvre, Paris, France, begun 1546.

Lescot's design for the Louvre palace reflects the Italian Renaissance classicism of Bramante, but the decreasing height of the stories, large scale of the windows, and steep roof are Northern European features.

Moreover, the French turned to Italy for study and travel. These exchanges caused a more extensive revolution in style than earlier, although certain French elements derived from the Gothic tradition persisted. This incorporation of Italian architectural ideas characterizes the redesigned Louvre in Paris, originally a medieval palace and fortress (FIG. 20-16). Since Charles V's renovation of the Louvre in the mid-14th century, the castle had languished relatively empty and fallen into a state of disrepair. Francis I initiated the project to update and expand the royal palace, but he died before the work was well under way. His architect, PIERRE LESCOT (1510–1578), continued under Henry II and produced the classical style later associated with 16th-century French architecture.

Although Chambord incorporated the formal vocabulary of the Early Renaissance, particularly from Lombardy, Lescot and his associates were familiar with the architectural style of Bramante and his school. In the west wing of the Cour Carré (Square Court; FIG. 23-12)



of the Louvre, each of the stories forms a complete order, and the cornices project enough to furnish a strong horizontal accent. The arcading on the ground story reflects the ancient Roman use of arches and produces more shadow than in the upper stories due to its recessed placement, thereby strengthening the design's visual base. On the second story, the pilasters rising from bases and the alternating curved and angular pediments supported by consoles have direct antecedents in several High Renaissance palaces (for example, FIG. 22-27). Yet the decreasing height of the stories, the scale of the windows (proportionately much larger than in Italian Renaissance buildings), and the steep roof suggest Northern European models. Especially French are the pavilions jutting from the wall. A feature the French long favored-double columns framing a niche—punctuates the pavilions. The building's vertical lines assert themselves. Openings deeply penetrate the wall, and sculptures by Jean Goujon (ca. 1510-1565) abound. Other Northern European countries imitated this French classical manner—its doublecolumned pavilions, tall and wide windows, profuse statuary, and steep roofs-although with local variations. The modified classicism the French produced was the only classicism to serve as a model for Northern European architects through most of the 16th century.

#### THE NETHERLANDS

With the demise of the Duchy of Burgundy in 1477 and the division of that territory between France and the Holy Roman Empire, the Netherlands at the beginning of the 16th century consisted of 17 provinces (corresponding to modern Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg). The Netherlands was among the most commercially advanced and prosperous European countries. Its extensive network of rivers and easy access to the Atlantic Ocean provided a setting con-

ducive to overseas trade, and shipbuilding was one of the most profitable businesses. The region's commercial center shifted geographically toward the end of the 15th century, partly because of buildup of silt in the Bruges estuary. Traffic relocated to Antwerp, which became the hub of economic activity in the Netherlands after 1510. As many as 500 ships a day passed through Antwerp's harbor, and large trading companies from England, the Holy Roman Empire, Italy, Portugal, and Spain established themselves in the city.

During the second half of the 16th century, the Netherlands was under the political control of Philip II of Spain (r. 1556–1598), who had inherited the region from his father Charles V. The economic prosperity of the Netherlands served as a potent incentive for Philip II to strengthen his control over the territory. However, his heavy-handed tactics and repressive measures led in 1579 to revolt, resulting in the formation of two federations. The Union of Arras, a Catholic confederation of southern Netherlandish provinces, remained under Spanish dominion, and the Union of Utrecht, consisting of Protestant northern provinces, became the Dutch Republic (MAP 25-1).

The increasing number of Netherlandish citizens converting to Protestantism affected the arts and resulted in a corresponding decrease in large-scale altarpieces and religious works (although grand works continued to be commissioned for Catholic churches). Much of Netherlandish art of this period provides a wonderful glimpse into the lives of various strata of society, from nobility to peasantry, capturing their activities, environment, and values.

**HIERONYMOUS BOSCH** The most famous Netherlandish painter at the turn of the 16th century was HIERONYMUS BOSCH (ca. 1450–1516), whose most famous work is *Garden of Earthly Delights* (FIG. **23-13**). Bosch is one of the most fascinating and puzzling



**23-13** HIERONYMUS BOSCH, Garden of Earthly Delights, 1505–1510. Oil on wood, center panel 7'  $2\frac{5}{8}$ "  $\times$  6'  $4\frac{3}{4}$ ", each wing 7'  $2\frac{5}{8}$ "  $\times$  3'  $2\frac{1}{4}$ ". Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Bosch was the most imaginative and enigmatic painter of his era. In this triptych, which may commemorate a wedding, he created a fantasy world filled with nude men and women and bizarre creatures and objects.

The Netherlands

**23-14** Jan Gossaert, *Neptune and Amphitrite*, ca. 1516. Oil on wood, 6'  $2'' \times 4'$   $\frac{3}{4}''$ . Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

Dürer's Fall of Man (FIG. 23-1) inspired the poses of Gossaert's classical deities, but the architectural setting is probably based on sketches of ancient buildings Gossaert made during his trip to Rome.



painters in history. Interpretations of Bosch differ widely. Scholars debate whether he was a satirist, an irreligious mocker, or a pornographer, a heretic or an orthodox fanatic like Girolamo Savonarola, his Italian contemporary (see Chapter 21).

Garden of Earthly Delights is Bosch's most enigmatic, and no interpretation has ever won universal acceptance. This large-scale work

takes the familiar form of a monumental triptych. The format suggests a religious function for Bosch's painting, but *Garden of Earthly Delights* resided in the palace of Henry III of Nassau, regent of the Netherlands, seven years after its completion. This location suggests a secular commission for private use. Some scholars have proposed that, given the work's central themes of marriage, sex, and procreation, the painting probably commemorates a wedding, a theme seen earlier in *Giovanni Arnolfini and His Bride* (FIG. 20-1) and in *A Goldsmith in His Shop* (FIG. 20-11). Any similarity to these paintings ends there, however. Whereas Jan van Eyck and Petrus Christus grounded their depictions of betrothed couples in 15th-century life and custom, Bosch's image portrays a visionary world of fantasy and intrigue.

In the left panel, God presents Eve to Adam in a landscape, presumably the Garden of Eden. Bosch placed the event in a wildly imaginative setting that includes an odd pink fountainlike structure in a body of water and an array of fanciful and unusual animals. These details may hint at an interpretation involving *alchemy*—the medieval study of seemingly magical changes, especially chemical changes. (Witchcraft also involved alchemy.) The right panel, in contrast, bombards viewers with the horrors of Hell. Beastly creatures devour people, while others are impaled or strung on musical instruments, as if on a medieval rack. A gambler is nailed to his own table. A spidery monster embraces a girl while toads bite her. A sea of inky darkness envelops all of these horrific scenes. Observers must search through the hideous enclosure of Bosch's Hell to take in its fascinating though repulsive details.

Sandwiched between Paradise and Hell is the huge central panel, in which nude people blithely cavort in a landscape dotted with bizarre creatures and unidentifiable objects. The numerous



**23-15** QUINTEN MASSYS, Money-Changer and His Wife, 1514. Oil on wood,  $2' 3\frac{3}{4}'' \times 2' 2\frac{3}{8}''$ . Louvre, Paris

Massys's painting depicting a secular financial transaction is also a commentary on 16th-century Netherlandish values. The banker's wife shows more interest in the money-weighing than in her prayer book.

fruits and birds (fertility symbols) in the scene suggest procreation, and, indeed, many of the figures are paired off as couples. The orgiastic overtones of this panel, in conjunction with the terrifying image of Hell, have led some scholars to interpret this triptych as they have other Last Judgment images—as a warning to viewers of the fate awaiting the sinful, decadent, and immoral.

JAN GOSSAERT As in the Holy Roman Empire and France, developments in Italian Renaissance art interested many Netherlandish artists. Jan Gossaert (ca. 1478–1535) associated with humanist scholars and visited Italy, where he became fascinated with classical antiquity and its mythological subjects. Giorgio Vasari, the Italian artist and biographer and Gossaert's contemporary, wrote about him: "Jean Gossart [sic] of Mabuse was almost the first who took from Italy into Flanders the true method of making scenes full of nude figures and poetical inventions," although it is obvious Gossaert derived much of his classicism from Dürer.

Indeed, Dürer's *Fall of Man* (FIG. **23-1**) inspired the composition and poses in Gossaert's *Neptune and Amphitrite* (FIG. **23-14**). However, unlike Dürer's exquisitely small engraving, Gossaert's painting is more than six feet tall and four feet wide. The artist executed the painting with expected Netherlandish polish, skillfully drawing and carefully modeling the figures. Gossaert depicted the sea god with his

traditional attribute, the trident, and wearing a laurel wreath and an ornate conch shell rather than Dürer's fig leaf. Amphitrite is fleshy and, like Neptune, stands in a contrapposto stance. The architectural frame, which resembles the cella of a classical temple (FIG. 5-46), is an unusual mix of Doric and Ionic elements, including *bucrania* (ox skull decorations), a common motif in ancient architectural ornament. Gossaert likely based the classical setting on sketches he had made of ancient buildings while in Rome. He had traveled to Italy with Philip, bastard of Burgundy, this painting's patron. A Burgundian admiral (hence the Neptune reference), Philip became a bishop and kept this work in the innermost room of his castle.

**QUINTEN MASSYS** Antwerp's growth and prosperity, along with its wealthy merchants' propensity for collecting and purchasing art, attracted artists to the city. Among them was QUINTEN MASSYS (ca. 1466–1530), who became Antwerp's leading master after 1510. Son of a Louvain blacksmith, Massys demonstrated a willingness to explore the styles and modes of a variety of models, from Jan van Eyck to Bosch and from Rogier van der Weyden to Dürer and Leonardo. Yet his eclecticism was subtle and discriminating, enriched by an inventiveness that gave a personal stamp to his paintings.

In Money-Changer and His Wife (FIG. 23-15), Massys presented a professional man transacting business. He holds scales,



**23-16** Pieter Aertsen, *Butcher's Stall*, 1551. Oil on wood,  $4'\frac{3}{8}'' \times 6' 5\frac{3}{4}''$ . Uppsala University Art Collection, Uppsala.

At first glance *Butcher's Stall* appears to be a genre painting, but in the background Joseph leads a donkey carrying Mary and the Christ Child. Aertsen balanced images of gluttony with allusions to salvation.

checking the weight of coins on the table. The artist's detailed rendering of the figures, setting, and objects suggests a fidelity to observable fact. Thus, this work provides the viewer with insight into developing commercial practices. But Money-Changer and His Wife is also a commentary on Netherlandish values and mores. The painting highlights the financial transactions that were an increasingly prominent part of secular life in the 16th-century Netherlands and that distracted Christians from their religious duties. The banker's wife, for example, shows more interest in watching her husband weigh money than in reading her prayer book. Massys incorporated into his painting numerous references to the importance of a moral, righteous, and spiritual life, including a carafe with water and a candlestick, traditional religious symbols. The couple ignores them, focusing solely on money. On the right, through a window, an old man talks with another man, suggesting idleness and gossip. The reflected image in the convex mirror on the counter offsets this image of sloth and foolish chatter. There, a man reads what is most likely a Bible or prayer book. Behind him is a church steeple. An inscription on the original frame (now lost) read, "Let the balance be just and the weights equal" (Lev. 19:36), a caution that applies both to the money-changer's professional conduct and the eventual Last

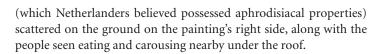
Judgment. The couple in this painting, however, have tipped the balance in favor of the pursuit of wealth.

PIETER AERTSEN This tendency to inject reminders about spiritual well-being emerges in Butcher's Stall (FIG. 23-16) by PIETER AERTSEN (ca. 1507–1575), who worked in Antwerp for more than three decades. At first glance, this painting appears to be a descriptive genre scene (one from everyday life). On display is an array of meat products—a side of a hog, chickens, sausages, a stuffed intestine, pig's feet, meat pies, a cow's head, a hog's head, and hanging entrails. Also visible are fish, pretzels, cheese, and butter. Like Massys, Aertsen embedded strategically placed religious images in his painting. In the background, Joseph leads a donkey carrying Mary and the Christ Child. The Holy Family stops to offer alms to a beggar and his son, while the people behind the Holy Family wend their way toward a church. Furthermore, the crossed fishes on the platter and the pretzels and wine in the rafters on the upper left all refer to "spiritual food" (pretzels often served as bread during Lent). Aertsen accentuated these allusions to salvation through Christ by contrasting them to their opposite—a life of gluttony, lust, and sloth. He represented this degeneracy with the oyster and mussel shells



**23-17** CATERINA VAN HEMESSEN, *Self-Portrait*, 1548. Oil on panel,  $1'\frac{3}{4}'' \times 9\frac{7}{8}''$ . Kunstmuseum, Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel.

In this first known Northern European self-portrait by a woman, Caterina van Hemessen represented herself as a confident artist momentarily interrupting her work to look out at the viewer.



CATERINA VAN HEMESSEN With the accumulation of wealth in the Netherlands, portraits increased in popularity. The self-portrait (FIG. 23-17) by CATERINA VAN HEMESSEN (1528–1587) is the first known Northern European self-portrait by a woman. Here, she confidently presented herself as an artist who interrupts her work to look toward the viewer. She holds brushes, a palette, and a *maulstick* (a stick used to steady the hand while painting) in her left hand and delicately applies pigment to the canvas with her right hand. Van Hemessen's father, Jan Sanders van Hemessen, a well-known painter, trained her. Caterina ensured proper identification (and credit) through the inscription in the painting: "Caterina van Hemessen painted me / 1548 / her age 20."

**LEVINA TEERLINC** Another female painter, LEVINA TEERLINC (1515–1576) of Bruges, established herself as such a respected artist that Henry VIII and his successors invited her to England to paint miniatures for them. There, she was a formidable rival of some of her male contemporaries at the court, such as Hans Holbein, and received greater compensation for her work than they did for theirs. Teerlinc's considerable skill is evident in a life-size portrait (FIG. **23-18**) attributed to her, which depicts Elizabeth I (1533–1603, r. 1558–1603) as a



**23-18** Attributed to Levina Teerling, *Elizabeth I as a Princess*, ca. 1559. Oil on wood,  $3' 6\frac{3}{4}'' \times 2' 8\frac{1}{4}''$ . The Royal Collection, Windsor Castle, Windsor.

Teerlinc received greater compensation for her work for the English court than did her male contemporaries. Her considerable skill is evident in this life-size portrait of Elizabeth I as a young princess.

composed, youthful princess. Daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth was probably in her late 20s when she sat for this portrait. Appropriate to her station in life, she wears an elegant brocaded gown, extravagant jewelry, and a headdress based on a style her mother popularized.

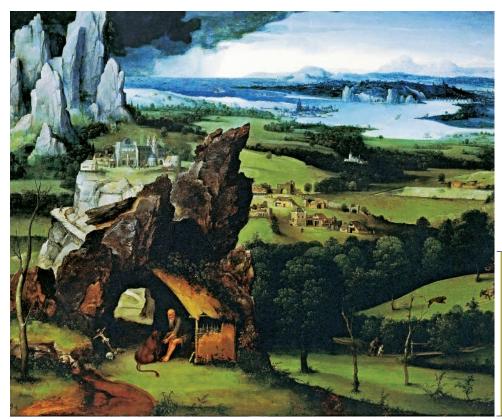
That female artists such as van Hemessen and Teerlinc were able to achieve such success is a testament to their determination and skill. Despite the difficulties for women in obtaining artistic training (see "The Artist's Profession in Flanders," Chapter 20, page 528), women contributed significantly to the lofty reputation Flemish artists enjoyed. In addition to participating as artists, women also played an important role as patrons in the 16th-century art world. Politically powerful women such as Margaret of Austria (regent of the Netherlands during the early 16th century; 1480–1530) and Mary of Hungary (queen consort of Hungary; 1505–1558) were avid collectors and patrons, and contributed substantially to the thriving state of the arts. Like other art patrons, these women collected and commissioned art not only for the aesthetic pleasure it provided but also for the status it bestowed on them and the cultural sophistication it represented.

**JOACHIM PATINIR** Landscape painting also flourished in the Netherlands. Particularly well known for his landscapes was JOACHIM PATINIR (d. 1524). According to one scholar, the word

**23-19** JOACHIM PATINIR, Landscape with Saint Jerome, ca. 1520–1524. Oil on wood,  $2' 5\frac{1}{8}'' \times 2' 11\frac{7}{8}''$ . Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Joachim Patinir, a renowned Netherlandish landscape painter, subordinated the story of Saint Jerome to the depiction of craggy rock formations, verdant rolling fields, and expansive bodies of water.

Landschaft (landscape) first emerged in German literature as a characterization of an artistic genre (category of art) when Dürer described Patinir as a "good landscape painter." In Landscape with Saint Jerome (FIG. 23-19), Patinir subordinated the saint, who removes a thorn from a lion's paw in the foreground, to the exotic and detailed landscape. Craggy rock formations, verdant rolling fields, villages with church steeples, expansive bodies of water, and a dramatic sky fill most of the panel. Patinir amplified the sense of distance by masterfully using color to enhance the visual effect of recession and advance.



1 ft

**PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER** The greatest Netherlandish painter of the mid-16th century was PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER (ca. 1528–1569), whose works reveal both an interest in the interrelationship of human beings and nature and Patinir's influence. But in Bruegel's paintings, no matter how huge a slice of the

world the artist shows, human activities remain the dominant theme. Like many of his contemporaries, Bruegel traveled to Italy, where he seems to have spent almost two years, venturing as far south as Sicily. Unlike other artists, however, Bruegel chose not to incorporate classical elements into his paintings.

**23-20** PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER, *Netherlandish Proverbs*, 1559. Oil on wood, 3'  $10'' \times 5' 4\frac{1}{8}''$ . Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

In this painting of a crowded Netherlandish village, Bruegel indulged his audience's obsession with proverbs and passion for clever imagery, and demonstrated his deep understanding of human nature.



I II.



**23-21** PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER, *Hunters in the Snow*, 1565. Oil on wood,  $3' 10\frac{1}{8}'' \times 5' 3\frac{3}{4}''$ . Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

In Hunters in the Snow, one of a series of paintings illustrating annual seasonal changes, Bruegel draws the viewer diagonally deep into the landscape by his mastery of line, shape, and composition.

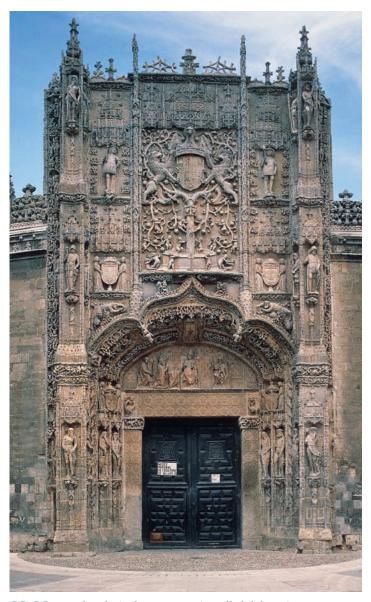
Bruegel's Netherlandish Proverbs (FIG. 23-20) depicts a Netherlandish village populated by a wide range of people (nobility, peasants, and clerics). From a bird's-eye view, the spectator encounters a mesmerizing array of activities reminiscent of the topsy-turvy scenes of Bosch (FIG. 23-13), but the purpose and meaning of Bruegel's anecdotal details are clear. By illustrating more than a hundred proverbs in this one painting, the artist indulged his Netherlandish audience's obsession with proverbs and passion for detailed and clever imagery. As the viewer scrutinizes the myriad vignettes within the painting, Bruegel's close observation and deep understanding of human nature become apparent. The proverbs depicted include, on the far left, a man in blue gnawing on a pillar ("He bites the column"—an image of hypocrisy). To his right, a man "beats his head against a wall" (an ambitious idiot). On the roof a man "shoots one arrow after the other, but hits nothing" (a shortsighted fool). In the far distance, the "blind lead the blind"—a subject to which Bruegel returned several years later in one of his most famous paintings.

In contrast to Patinir's Saint Jerome, lost in the landscape, the myriad, raucous characters of Bruegel's *Netherlandish Proverbs* fill the panel, so much so that the artist almost shut out the sky. *Hunters in the Snow* (FIG. **23-21**) is very different in character and illustrates the dynamic variety of Bruegel's work. One of a series of six paintings (some scholars think there were originally 12) illustrating seasonal changes in the year, *Hunters* refers back to older traditions of depicting seasons and peasants in Books of Hours (FIGS. **20-15** and **20-16**). The painting shows human figures and landscape locked in winter cold, reflecting the particularly severe winter of 1565, when Bruegel produced the painting. The weary hunters return with their hounds, women build fires, skaters skim the frozen pond, and the town and its church huddle in their mantle of snow. Bruegel rendered the landscape in an optically accurate manner. It develops

smoothly from foreground to background and draws the viewer diagonally into its depths. The painter's consummate skill in using line and shape and his subtlety in tonal harmony make this one of the great landscape paintings and an occidental counterpart of the masterworks of classical Chinese landscape (see Chapters 7 and 27).

#### **SPAIN**

Spain's ascent to power in Europe began in the mid-15th century with the marriage of Isabella of Castile (1451-1504) and Ferdinand of Aragon (1452-1516) in 1469. By the end of the 16th century, Spain had emerged as the dominant European power. Under the Habsburg rulers Charles V and Philip II, the Spanish Empire controlled a territory greater in extent than any ever known—a large part of Europe, the western Mediterranean, a strip of North Africa, and vast expanses in the New World. Spain acquired many of its New World colonies through aggressive overseas exploration. Among the most notable conquistadors sailing under the Spanish flag were Christopher Columbus (1451-1506), Vasco Nuñez de Balboa (ca. 1475-1517), Ferdinand Magellan (1480-1521), Hernán Cortés (1485-1547), and Francisco Pizarro (ca. 1470-1541). The Habsburg Empire, enriched by New World plunder, supported the most powerful military force in Europe. Spain defended and then promoted the interests of the Catholic Church in its battle against the inroads of the Protestant Reformation. Indeed, Philip II earned the title "Most Catholic King." Spain's crusading spirit, nourished by centuries of war with Islam, engaged body and soul in forming the most Catholic civilization of Europe and the Americas. In the 16th century, for good or for ill, Spain left the mark of Spanish power, religion, language, and culture on two hemispheres.



**23-22** Portal, Colegio de San Gregorio, Valladolid, Spain, ca. 1498.

The Plateresque architectural style takes its name from *platero* ("silversmith" in Spanish). At the center of this Valladolid portal's Late Gothic tracery is the coat of arms of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella.

COLEGIO DE SAN GREGORIO During the 15th century and well into the 16th, a Late Gothic style of architecture, the Plateresque, prevailed in Spain. Plateresque derives from the Spanish word platero, meaning "silversmith," and the Plateresque style in architecture is characterized by the delicate execution of its ornamentation, which resembles elegant metalwork. The Colegio de San Gregorio (Seminary of Saint Gregory; FIG. 23-22) in the Castilian city of Valladolid handsomely exemplifies the Plateresque manner. Great carved retables, like the German altarpieces that influenced them (FIGS. 20-18, 20-19, and 23-2, bottom), appealed to church patrons and architects in Spain. They thus made such retables a conspicuous decorative feature of their exterior architecture, dramatizing a portal set into an otherwise blank wall. The Plateresque entrance of San Gregorio is a lofty sculptured stone screen that bears no functional relation to the architecture behind it. On the entrance level, lacelike tracery reminiscent of Moorish design hems the flamboyant ogival arches. A great screen, paneled into sculptured compartments, rises above the tracery. In the center, the branches of a huge pomegranate



23-23 Portal, Casa de Montejo, Mérida, Mexico, 1549.

Spanish expansion brought the Plateresque style to the New World. The portal decoration of the home of the Yucatán's conqueror includes Spanish soldiers standing on the severed heads of Maya natives.

tree (symbolizing Granada, the Moorish capital of Spain the Habsburgs captured in 1492) wreathe the coat of arms of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. Cupids play among the tree branches, and, flanking the central panel, niches frame armed pages of the court, heraldic wild men symbolizing aggression, and armored soldiers, attesting to Spain's proud new militancy. In typical Plateresque and Late Gothic fashion, the activity of a thousand intertwined motifs unifies the whole design, which, in sum, creates an exquisitely carved panel greatly expanded in scale from the retables that inspired it.

**NEW SPAIN** Spanish expansion into the Western Hemisphere brought the Plateresque style to "New Spain" as well. A mid-16th-century gem of Plateresque architecture is the portal (FIG. **23-23**) of the Casa de Montejo in Mérida, Mexico. The house, built in 1549,



23-24 Juan de Herrera and Juan Bautista de Toledo, El Escorial, near Madrid, Spain, 1563-1584 (detail of an anonymous 18th-century painting).

Conceived by Charles V and built by Philip II, El Escorial is a combined royal mausoleum, church, monastery, and palace. The complex is classical in style with severely plain walls and massive towers.

was the palatial residence of Francisco de Montejo the Younger (1508-1565), the Spanish conqueror of the Yucatán who founded Mérida in 1542. The lower story features engaged classical columns on projecting pedestals and sculptured portrait busts of Montejo and his wife in roundels. The upper story is much more fanciful and fully Plateresque in style with a central coat of arms, as at Valladolid. The four statues of the second level are of special interest. The larger pair depicts bearded and armored Spanish soldiers standing on the severed heads of the Maya natives they conquered. Smaller in scale are two sheepskin-clad wild men holding clubs (also seen at Valladolid), probably personifications of the defeated indigenous population. The triumphal imagery is, ironically, the work of Maya sculptors from nearby Maní. In fact, the very stones used to build the Montejo house were taken from dismantled Maya temples in the area.

EL ESCORIAL In Spain itself, the Plateresque style gave way under Philip II to an Italian-derived classicism. The Italian style is on display in the expansive complex called El Escorial (FIG. 23-24), which Juan Bautista de Toledo (d. 1567) and Juan de Herrera (ca. 1530-1597), principally the latter, constructed for Philip II. In his will, Charles V stipulated that a "dynastic pantheon" be constructed to house the remains of past and future monarchs of Spain. Philip II, obedient to his father's wishes, chose a site some 30 miles northwest of Madrid in rugged terrain with barren mountains. There he built El Escorial, not only a royal mausoleum but also a church, a monastery, and a palace. Legend has it that the gridlike plan for the enormous complex, 625 feet wide and 520 feet deep,

symbolized the gridiron on which Saint Lawrence, El Escorial's patron saint, suffered his martyrdom.

The vast structure is in keeping with Philip's austere and conscientious character, his passionate Catholic religiosity, his proud reverence for his dynasty, and his stern determination to impose his will worldwide. He insisted that in designing El Escorial, the architects focus on simplicity of form, severity in the whole, nobility without arrogance, and majesty without ostentation. The result is a classicism of Doric severity, ultimately derived from Italian architecture and with the grandeur of Saint Peter's (FIG. 24-4) implicit in the scheme, but unique in Spanish and European architecture.

Only the three entrances, with the dominant central portal framed by superimposed orders and topped by a pediment in the Italian fashion, break the long sweep of the structure's severely plain walls. Massive square towers punctuate the four corners. The stress on the central axis, with its subdued echoes in the two flanking portals, anticipates the three-part organization of later Baroque facades (see Chapter 24). The construction material for the entire complex (including the church)—granite, a difficult stone to work—conveys a feeling of starkness and gravity. The church's massive facade and the austere geometry of the interior complex, with its blocky walls and ponderous arches, produce an effect of overwhelming strength and weight. The entire complex is a monument to the collaboration of a great king and remarkably understanding architects. El Escorial stands as the overpowering architectural expression of Spain's spirit in its heroic epoch and of the character of Philip II, the extraordinary ruler who directed it.

**23-25** EL Greco, Burial of Count Orgaz, 1586. Oil on canvas,  $16' \times 12'$ . Santo Tomé, Tolodo

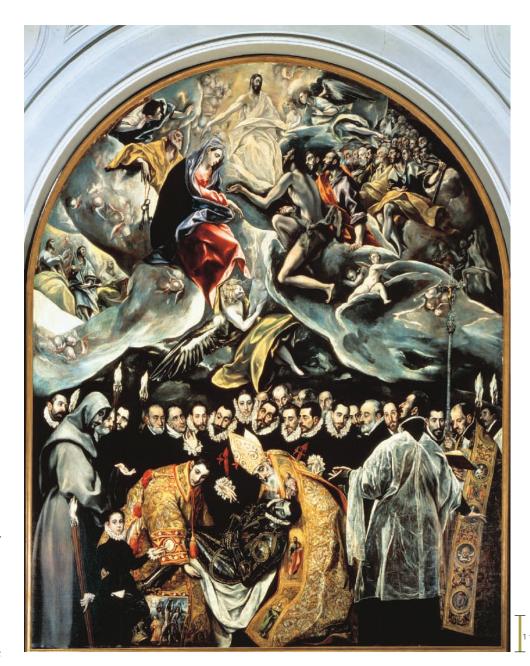
El Greco's art is a blend of Byzantine and Italian Mannerist elements. His intense emotional content captured the fervor of Spanish Catholicism, and his dramatic use of light foreshadowed the Baroque style.

EL GRECO Doménikos Theotokópoulos, called EL GRECO (ca. 1547–1614), was born on Crete but emigrated to Italy as a young man. In his youth, he absorbed the traditions of Late Byzantine frescoes and mosaics. While still young, El Greco went to Venice, where he worked in Titian's studio, although Tintoretto's painting apparently made a stronger impression on him. A brief trip to Rome explains the influences of Roman and Florentine Mannerism on his work. By 1577 he had left for Spain to spend the rest of his life in Toledo.

El Greco's art is a strong personal blending of Byzantine and Mannerist elements. The intense emotionalism of his paintings, which naturally appealed to Spanish piety, and a great reliance on and mastery of color bound him to 16th-century Venetian art and to Mannerism. El Greco's art was not strictly Spanish (although it appealed to certain sectors of that society), for it had no Spanish antecedents and little effect on later Spanish painters. Nevertheless, El Greco's hybrid style captured the fervor of Spanish Catholicism.

A vivid expression of this fervor is the artist's masterpiece, *Burial of Count Orgaz* (FIG. **23-25**), painted in 1586 for the

church of Santo Tomé in Toledo. El Greco based the painting on the legend that the count of Orgaz, who had died some three centuries before and who had been a great benefactor of Santo Tomé, was buried in the church by Saints Stephen and Augustine, who miraculously descended from Heaven to lower the count's body into its sepulcher. In the painting, El Greco carefully distinguished the terrestrial and celestial spheres. The brilliant Heaven that opens above irradiates the earthly scene. The painter represented the terrestrial realm with a firm realism, whereas he depicted the celestial, in his quite personal manner, with elongated undulating figures, fluttering draperies, and a visionary swirling cloud. Below, the two saints lovingly lower the count's armor-clad body, the armor and heavy robes painted with all the rich sensuousness of the Venetian school. A solemn chorus of black-clad Spanish personages fills the background. In the carefully individualized features of these figures, El Greco demonstrated that he was also a great portraitist. These men call to mind both the conquistadors of the early 16th century and the Spanish naval officers who, two years after the completion of this painting, led the Great Armada against both Protestant England and the Netherlands.



of an angel above link the painting's lower and upper spheres. The action of the angel, who carries the count's soul in his arms as Saint John and the Virgin intercede for it before the throne of Christ, reinforces this connection. El Greco's deliberate change in style to distinguish between the two levels of reality gives the viewer an opportunity to see the artist's early and late manners in the same work, one below the other. His relatively sumptuous and realistic presentation of the earthly sphere still has strong roots in Venetian art, but the abstractions and distortions El Greco used to show the immaterial nature of the heavenly realm characterized his later style. His elongated figures existing in undefined spaces, bathed in a cool light of uncertain origin, explain El Greco's usual classification as a Mannerist, but it is difficult to apply that label to him without reservations. Although he used Mannerist formal devices, El Greco's primary concerns were emotion and conveying his religious passion or arousing that of observers. The forcefulness of his paintings is the result of his unique, highly developed expressive style. His strong sense of movement and use of light prefigured the Baroque style of the 17th cen-

tury, examined next in Chapter 24.

The upward glances of some of the figures below and the flight

#### THE BIG PICTURE

### NORTHERN EUROPE AND SPAIN, 1500 TO 1600

#### **HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE**

- Widespread dissatisfaction with the Church in Rome led to the Protestant Reformation, splitting Christendom in half. Protestants objected to the sale of indulgences and rejected most of the sacraments of the Catholic Church. They also condemned ostentatious church decoration as a form of idolatry that distracted the faithful from communication with God.
- As a result, Protestant churches were relatively bare, but art, especially prints, still played a role in Protestantism. Lucas Cranach, for example, effectively used visual imagery to contrast Catholic and Protestant views of salvation in his woodcut Allegory of Law and Grace.
- The greatest printmaker of the Holy Roman Empire was Albrecht Dürer, who was also a painter. Dürer was the first artist outside Italy to become an international celebrity. His work ranged from biblical subjects to botanical studies. *Fall of Man* reflects Dürer's studies of the Vitruvian theory of human proportions and of classical statuary. Dürer's engravings rival painting in tonal quality.
- Other German artists, such as Albrecht Altdorfer, achieved fame as landscape painters. Hans Holbein was a renowned portraitist who became court painter in England. Holbein's *The French Ambassadors* portrays two worldly humanists and includes a masterfully rendered anamorphic skull.





Holbein, The French Ambassadors, 1533

#### FRANCE

- King Francis I fought against the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and declared Protestantism illegal in France. An admirer of Italian art, he invited several prominent Mannerists to work at his court and decorate his palace at Fontainebleau.
- French architecture of the 16th century is an eclectic mix of Italian and Northern European elements, as seen in Pierre Lescot's design of the renovated Louvre palace in Paris and Francis's château at Chambord. The château combines classical motifs derived from Italian palazzi with a Gothic roof silhouette.



Château de Chambord, Chambord, begun 1519

#### THE NETHERLANDS

- The Netherlands was one of the most commercially advanced and prosperous countries in 16th-century Europe. Much of Netherlandish art of this period provides a picture of contemporary life and values.
- Pieter Aertsen of Antwerp, for example, painted *Butcher's Stall*, which seems to be a straightforward genre scene but includes the Holy Family offering alms to a beggar in the background. The painting provides a stark contrast between gluttony and religious piety.
- Landscapes were the specialty of Joachim Patinir. Pieter Bruegel's repertory also included landscape painting. His *Hunters in the Snow* is one of a series of paintings depicting the seasonal changes of the year and the activities associated with them, as in traditional Books of Hours.
- Prominent female artists of the period include Caterina van Hemessen, who painted the first known Northern European self-portrait of a woman, and Levina Teerlinc, who painted portraits for the English court.



Aertsen, Butcher's Stall, 1551

#### SPAIN

- At the end of the 16th century, Spain was the dominant power in Europe and ruled an empire greater in extent than any ever known, including vast territories in the New World.
- The Spanish Plateresque style of architecture takes its name from *platero* ("silversmith") and features delicate ornamentation resembling metalwork.
- Under Philip II the Plateresque style gave way to an Italian-derived classicism, seen at its best in El Escorial, a royal mausoleum, monastery, and palace complex near Madrid.
- The leading painter of 16th-century Spain was the Greek-born El Greco, who combined Byzantine style, Italian Mannerism, and the religious fervor of Catholic Spain in works such as *Burial of Count Orgaz*.



El Greco, *Burial of Count Orgaz,* 1586