

Masterpieces of Early Italian Renaissance Bronze Statuettes

Guests of Honor from the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence

Student Exhibition Self-Guide



Antonio del Pollaiuolo (Italian, Florence, 1431/2–1498). *Hercules and Antaeus*, late 1460s – early 1470s. Bronze. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, inv 280 B.

LEARN

Since the beginning of time, human development has rested upon our ability to take an existing idea and improve it in some way.

Artists are no exception.

During the mid-to-late 1400s, Italy began to experience a cultural “rebirth” as it emerged out of the Middle Ages. Driven by a revival of ancient Roman ideals of beauty, realism, and new studies of anatomy, artists of the early **Italian Renaissance** depicted the human body as naturalistic and expressed a range of emotions. Sculptors revived ancient artistic practices, such as the **lost-wax method** for bronze casting, and developed new compositions, like the **spiral figure**, to show off the true-to-life human form in movement.

Bible stories and ancient Greek and Roman mythology were popular topics for early **Italian Renaissance** sculptors to depict. As you walk the gallery, consider the stories being told through these statuettes.

NOTICE

Look closely at each of the bronze statuettes nearby. Walk around these objects to get a 360-degree view. How does viewing the statuettes from all angles change your perception of the works?

Notice the natural anatomy and expressive facial emotions of the bronze statuettes.

Terms to know:

Lost-wax method: a process of metal casting.

Spiral figure: a pose in which the human body twists with the torso and legs turned in opposite directions.

Statuette: a smaller than life-sized statue.

The Italian Renaissance: a period of cultural flourishing in the arts, sciences, and literature from the 14th-17th century.

SKETCH

Choose one or more of the bronze statuettes to sketch.

CONNECT

In what ways do contemporary artists revive and advance past creations?

Think about musicians, dancers, digital artists, architects, and other artistic professions.

EXPLORE

Visit the African galleries | View the Benin Horseman. The artist of this bronze sculpture used the lost-wax method, the same method used to create the bronze statuettes in *Masterpieces of Early Italian Renaissance Bronze Statuettes*.

Visit the Ancient Greek and Roman galleries | See similar sculptures to those that inspired the early Italian Renaissance sculptors from the Bargello Museum.

Visit the Medieval galleries | Compare the ways in which anatomy and facial expressions are depicted a few hundred years prior to the early Renaissance period in Europe.

Watch a Video | Use the QR code to the right to learn more about the process of making bronze statues using the **lost-wax method**.

