

## Art for Mother's Day: Mothers and Children

Mother's Day... it is all about the bond between a mother and her children. This theme has been explored over the years by numerous artists.

I would be remiss if I did not include in this piece works of art that feature Mary and Jesus. Two pieces that are particularly moving are Michelangelo's *Pietà* and Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*.

Michelangelo's *Pietà* (1498-1499), a work of Renaissance sculpture, depicts the body of Jesus on the lap of his mother Mary after the Crucifixion. It is the only piece Michelangelo ever signed. After being damaged by a mentally disturbed person, the *Pietà*, which is in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, is now protected by bullet-proof glass.



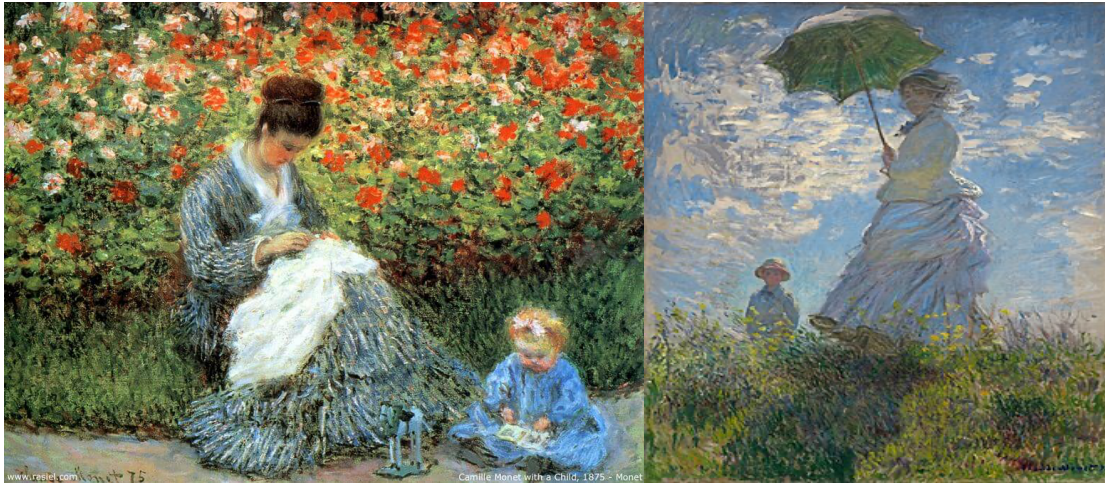
The *Sistine Madonna* was commissioned by Pope Julius II in 1512 and was one of the last Madonnas painted by Raphael. One of Raphael's most recognized works, the painting today is as well known for its depiction of Mary and Jesus as it is for the cherubs at the bottom of the painting.



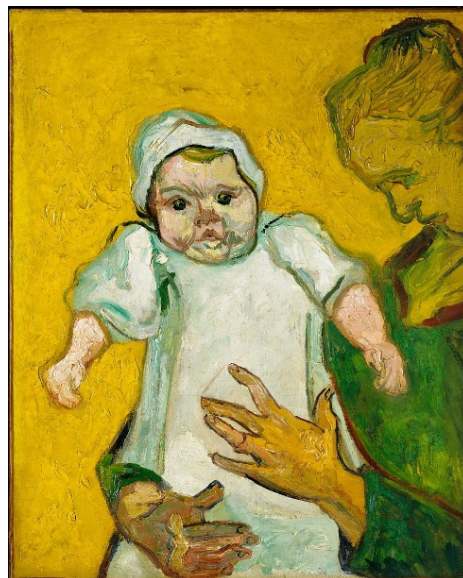
Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun (1755-1842) was a prominent French portrait painter. Her artistic style has been described as late Rococo with elements of the neoclassicism that was emerging during her career. Her 1789 self-portrait with her daughter, inspired by Madonna paintings of the High Renaissance, went against social norms because it showed Le Brun smiling open-mouthed.



Claude Monet, the French impressionist artist, painted his wife Camille and their son, Jean, in the garden at their home in Argenteuil, France in 1875. In the same year, he painted the two of them en plein air, strolling on a windy day.



Shortly after Van Gogh relocated from Paris to Arles in 1888, he painted the entire family of the local postman, Joseph Roulin. The painting below is of Augustine Roulin and her infant daughter, Marcelle.



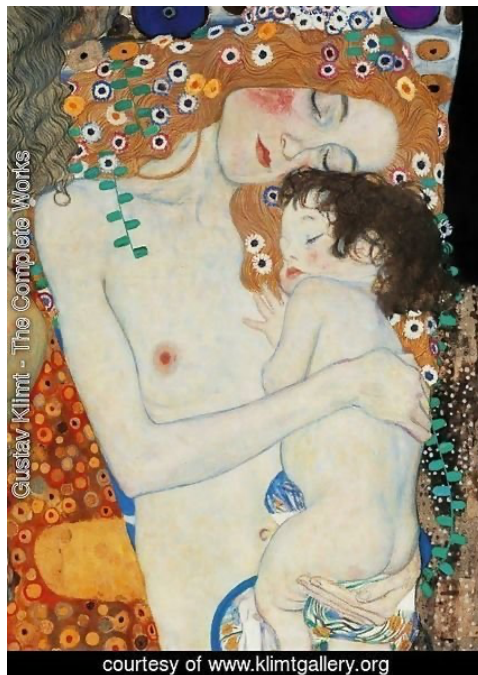
American impressionist artist, Mary Cassatt, painted many portraits of women with their children. One of the most celebrated is *The Child's Bath* (1893), influenced by her study of Japanese art.



Austrian artist, Gustave Klimt, completed a painting entitled *The Three Ages of Woman* in 1905. The entire painting, symbolizing the stages of life, is shown below.



Below is a close up of the Mother and Child stage of life portion of the painting.



Amedeo Modigliani (Italian, 1884-1920) is known for his portraits with elongated faces and necks. He was not appreciated as an artist during his lifetime, but after his premature death at 35, became one of the most forged artists in the world. In 2017, Genoa's Ducal Palace hosted an exhibit of 21 of what were believed to be Modigliani paintings. Of the 21, 20 were determined to be fakes. The painting below, *Seated Woman with Child (Motherhood)*, was painted in 1919 while Modigliani was living in Paris.



One of the most iconic photos taken by an American photojournalist is the 1936 photo *Migrant Mother, Nipomo, California* by Dorothea Lange. The photo is of Florence Johnson, age 32, a migrant farm worker, and three of her seven children, shot during the Depression after the crops had frozen. It became a symbol of the plight of migrant farm workers during the Great Depression.



Alice Neel (1900-1984) was an American painter known for her Expressionistic and daringly honest portraits of friends, family and lovers. She is widely regarded as one of the foremost American figurative artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The two works of art shown below were painted forty years apart, *Mother and Child, Havana* in 1926 and *Mother and Child (Nancy and Olivia)* in 1967.



Juan Miró (Spanish, 1893-1983) was a painter, sculptor and ceramicist. His work is interpreted as Surrealism, but it sometimes veers into Fauvism and Expressionism. The two works of his below, both in the collection at the Fundació Juan Miró in the artist's native Barcelona, are entitled *Seated Woman and Child* (1967) and *Woman and Child II* (1969).



The photograph below is of Fernando Botero's (Colombian, b. 1932) 1988 bronze sculpture, *Mother and Child*, located in the public Besthoff Sculpture Garden in New Orleans. Botero's signature style, also known as "Boterismo", depicts people and figures in large, exaggerated volume, which can represent political criticism or humor.



With a career spanning eight decades from the 1930s until 2010, Louise Bourgeois (French, American, 1911-2010) is one of the great figures of modern and contemporary art. She is best known for her large-scale sculptures and installations inspired by her memories and experiences. Her 30 foot tall spider statue, *Maman (Ama)*, 1999, includes a sac containing 32 marble eggs and its abdomen and thorax are made of ribbed bronze. According to Bourgeois, "The Spider is an ode to my mother. She was my best friend. Like a spider, my mother was a weaver. My family was in the business of tapestry restoration, and my mother was in charge of the workshop. Like spiders, my mother was very clever. Spiders are friendly presences that eat mosquitoes. We know that mosquitoes spread diseases and are therefore unwanted. So, spiders are helpful and protective, just like my mother." The photo on the left is of the version located at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. The photo on the right is a close-up of the egg sac.

