



Pliny the Elder,  
as imagined by a  
19th-century artist



Duccio,  
*Madonna and  
Child*, 1284,  
tempera and gold  
on wood

1ST CENTURY

4TH CENTURY

5TH - 14TH CENTURY

Pliny the Elder (23-79), a Roman author and naturalist, writes about Greek and Roman painting methods and specifically mentions the use of egg yolk as a binder for wall and panel paintings.

Egyptians use temperas, including egg tempera, to create portraits on panels that are secured to mummified remains. Unable to change a stroke of tempera once applied, the artist of the portrait above paints over an earlier attempt. (Worn paint reveals a previous effort underneath.)

With the rise of Christianity, the use of egg tempera on wood panel becomes more widespread as demand for altarpieces and religious icons increases.



Lorenzo Monaco,  
*Adoration of the Magi*,  
1420-1422, tempera  
on panel



Caravaggio was a  
master of realistic  
observation and  
the use of  
dramatic lighting.

Caravaggio,  
*Boy Peeling Fruit*,  
1592-1593, oil  
on canvas

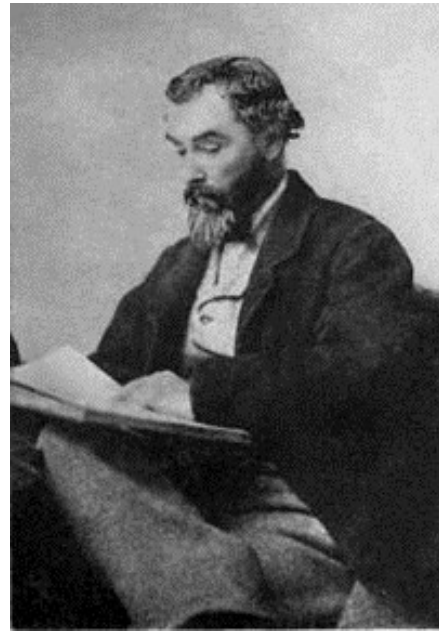
## 15TH CENTURY

## 16TH CENTURY

In 1400, Italian painter Cennino Cennini (c. 1360-1427) publishes *Il Libro dell'Arte*, which describes egg tempera painting techniques like the careful layering of warm and cool tones to build desired colors. (See this technique in the photographed stages of Wessel's *Taurus*.)

Egg tempera is the primary method of painting in Italy and much of Europe. The use of oil paint has not yet expanded beyond Northern Europe.

Accompanying the spread of humanism (a system of thought emphasizing human senses and experience), artists throughout Europe look for ways to enhance the naturalism of their work. Artists find oil paint well-suited to realistic rendering of texture, color, and the effects of natural light on objects and figures. By the 16th century, oil has replaced tempera as the dominant painting medium throughout Europe.



## 19TH CENTURY

In 1861, art historian James Jackson Jarves brings 119 works by early Italian masters to Yale University where they become the nucleus of a teaching collection. The majority of the works are tempera, spurring an American revival of tempera painting.



This work is on view in the next gallery.

Robert Vickrey, *The Arch*, c. 1962, egg tempera

## 20TH CENTURY

In 1939, Daniels Thompson publishes *The Practice of Tempera Painting*, the first comprehensive step-by-step guide on the subject in English. The tempera revival continues into the mid-20th century, as artists working in various styles and subjects share an interest in the medium. Among these artists are American icons Thomas Hart Benton, Andrew Wyeth, Jacob Lawrence, and Robert Vickrey.



This work is on view in the next gallery.

Koo Schadler, *Turtles Dream Too*, 2005, egg tempera and oil glazes on panel

## 21ST CENTURY

Artists Fred Wessel and Koo Schadler, among others, expand interest in egg tempera through their art, workshops, and writings. Their compositions clearly pay homage to historical traditions while integrating current subjects and styles. Such efforts sustain the freshness and appeal of this ancient medium, even into the 21st century.