

## Handout 5 – Renaissance Art

from Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486) More on p. 189.

. . . I feel that I have come to some understanding of why man is the most fortunate of living things and, consequently, deserving of all admiration; of what may be the condition in the hierarchy of beings assigned to him, which draws upon him the envy, not of the brutes alone, but of the astral beings and of the very intelligences which dwell beyond the confines of the world . . .

**Key images:**

Early Renaissance – Donatello, *David*, 1432; p 203.

Botticelli, *la Primavera*, p 199

High Renaissance – Michelangelo, *David*, c. 1500; p 204

Raphael, *School of Athens*, fresco; p. 212

Dürer, Albrecht, *Self-Portrait at 28*, p 234. **oil**. (Dürer, *Knight*, . . . , p. 234. **Engraving**.)

Bruegel, *The Hunters' Return*, p 237

Late Renaissance (Mannerism) – *Madonna with the Long Neck*, p 252

**Mannerism** - Post-Renaissance, Pre-Baroque style of painting and sculpture in Italy characterized by elongated, distorted and exaggerated figures. The pictorial space is often crowded, complex or confusing. See also the definition in the glossary of the textbook. The term was coined in 1914 by an art historian. More generally, the term can be used to describe any extreme exaggeration in an art form; for example, the Ars Nova period in music was followed by a very brief period of very exaggerated music that is often called **mannerist**. When an American Idol contestant buries a melody under a ton of swooping ornamentation (some critics call this "over-souling"), it might be said that it is a very **mannered** way of singing.

*Sprezzatura* - a studied carelessness; *The Book of the Courtier* (1528; see p. 210), a work in the Italian High Renaissance by Baldassare Castiglione, advises the well-rounded court politician to "practice in all things a certain nonchalance (*sprezzatura*) which conceals all artistry and makes whatever one says or does seem uncontrived and effortless. . . . Grace springs especially from this . . . and so facility in such things excites the greatest wonder." This grace is a component of being a Renaissance Man. Contrast it with the other way of wielding power in the Renaissance: *Terribilita*. *Terribilita* – awe-inspiring power.