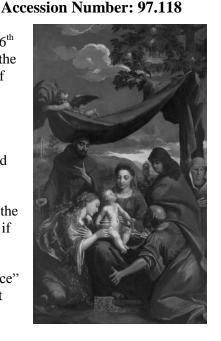# MFA H

Virgin and Child with Saints Mary Magdalene, Peter, Clare, Francis, and an Abbess
by Lo Scarsellino (Ippolito Scarsella) (Ferrara, Italy, 1550-1620)
Oil on canvas, 110 7/8 – 63 5/8 inches (281.6 – 161.6 cm)   **Accession Number: 97.118**

Scarsellino was one of the last important painters working in Ferrara in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. At this time, in response to the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Church encouraged artists to make vivid pictures bringing the legends of Christ together from across historical periods. In this painting, called a *sacra conversazione*, or "holy conversation," saints are gathered together around the Virgin and Child. The saints can be recognized by the symbols that exemplify them. In the background is a ruin of classical architecture, a symbol of the old world order. Here, pagan antiquity is replaced by the Christian world, represented by the Christ child at the center of the painting.

Before researching a work of art from the MFAH collection, it is helpful to view the work first hand. The information in books and journals will be more meaningful if you have taken advantage of the opportunity to inspect the object itself.

"Reference" books you will find on the library's main floor, and "Ready Reference" books are behind the information desk. Other books can be obtained by asking at the information desk.

Object Specific Information

Bowron, Edgar and Mary Morton. *Masterworks of European Painting in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston,* 2000. (Pages 45-46)   ND 450 .M87 2000 Ready Ref.

Landay, Janet. *Museum of Fine Arts, Houston Visitors Guide*, 2000. (Page 55)   N 576 .H7 A85 2000 Ready Ref.

Coonin, Arnold, ed. *Old Masters in Context*, 2003. (Page 27-28)   ND 623 .R673 C 66 2003

General Art Surveys

Gardner's Art through the Ages. 12th ed., 2005. (Chapter 22)   N 5300 .G25 2005 Ready Ref.

Janson's *History of Art*, 7th ed., 2007. (Chapter 17)   N 5300 .J3 2007 Ready Ref.

Stokstad, Marilyn. *Art History*, 1995. (Chapter 18)   N 5300 .S923 1995 Ready Ref.

Lo Scarsellino

Novelli, Maria Angela. *Lo Scarsellino*, 1955.   ND 623 .S37 N68 1955

Grove Dictionary of Art. Vol. 28 "Scarsellino," 1996. (Pages 38-9)   N 31 .D5 v.28 1996 Ref.

Italian and Ferrarese Art

Gardner, Edmund. *The Painters of the School of Ferrara*, 1911.   ND 621 .F4 G3

Southorn, Janet. *Power and Display in the Seventeenth Century*, 1988.   N 6921 .F4 S68 1988

Wittkower, Rudolph. A*rt and Architecture in Italy*, 1600-1750, 1958.   N 6916 .W5 1958

Burke, Peter, et al. *History of Italian Art*, 1996.   N 6911 .S7613 1994 v.1-2

Sohm, Phillip. *Style in the Art Theory of Early Modern Italy*, 2001.   N 614 .S64 2001

The Virgin and Child in Art

Heller, Ena, ed. *Icons or Portraits?: Images of Jesus and Mary,* 2002.   N 8050 .H44 2002

Katz, Melissa. *Divine Mirrors: The Virgin Mary in the Visual Arts*, 2001.   N 8070 .K3 2001

The Saints in Art

Zuffi, Stefano. *Saints in Art*, 2003.   N 8079.5 .G5613 2003 Ref.
    (s.v. "Clare" (p. 94), "Francis" (p. 130), "Mary Magdalene" (p. 257),
    "Peter" (p. 297))

Butler's Lives of the Saints, 1990.   BX 4654 .B8 1990 Ref.
    (s.v. "Clare" (vol. 2, p. 664), "Mary Magdalene" (vol. 3 p. 161),
    "Peter" (vol. 3 p 309), "Francis" (vol. 4 p. 22))

de Voragine, Jacobus. *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, 1993.   BX 4654 .J334 1993 v. 1-2
    (s.v. "Saint Peter" (vol. 1, p. 340), "Saint Mary
    Magdalene" (vol. 1, p. 374), "Saint Francis" (vol. 2, p. 220))

Catholic Encyclopedia, 1911.   [Online Resource Room]
    http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/index.html

The Catholic Reformation (Counter Reformation)

Dewald, Jonathan. *Europe 1450-1789: Encyclopedia*, 2004. (Pages 145-150)   D 208 .D48 2004 v.5 Ref.

Hsia, R. Po-Chia. *The World of Catholic Renewal: 1540-1770*, 1998.   BX 1304 .H75 1998

While some **Internet resources** are not appropriate for scholarly research, the *Catholic Encyclopedia* website recommended above comes from a well-regarded public domain text published in 1911. It provides a quick background and useful, interactive references to other public domain sources. It is always advisable to examine all sources carefully.

This reference guide is just the tip of the iceberg on helpful resources in the library's holdings. Many of the suggested resources above have their own **bibliographies**. Each of these may lead you to other resources that would also be helpful in your research here in the museum or in another library. To find additional books, use keywords such as "Italian" and "Counter Reformation" in the **on-line catalog**. Once you find a few relevant titles, pay attention to the subject headings to identify similar books.
Examples of useful subject headings are:

>*Painting, Italian – 17th century*
>*Art, Italian – 17th century*
>*Christian art and symbolism*
>*Mary, Blessed Virgin, Saint – Art*
>*Christian saints in art*

For guidelines about writing it may be helpful to look at **Sylvan Barnet's** *A Short Guide to Writing about Art*, which includes tips for looking, reading, and writing about art. Ask for it at the reference desk. At every stage of your work, please allow the library staff to help you. We can be reached at 713-639-7325.