

Saints occupied the same landscape as ordinary people in Renaissance paintings and the landscape was earth instead of heaven. In the Middle Ages it was common for artists to represent figures of heaven against a gold background, a symbol for the beauty and value of the atmosphere of heaven. As Renaissance artists experimented with new Humanist ideas, the natural landscape began to appear as a background in paintings. Saints left their golden atmosphere to occupy the same gardens, forests and buildings that everyday people lived in.

During the Renaissance, the use mathematical perspective to represent space in paintings was invented. Earlier attempts at representing space often resulted in furniture or buildings that look just a little "off." Using mathematical formulas, instead of just the human eye, gave artists new tools to represent three-dimensional space in a convincing way. Renaissance paintings began to give the impression that the frame around the painting was a window frame, and looking at the painting was like looking through a window.

Artists began to use oil paints for the first time during the Renaissance. In the Middle Ages, egg tempera was used most widely. Mixing egg yolks with pigments made egg tempera and artists made their own paints. Egg tempera dried quickly and created a flat, rough surface. Oil paint was invented in the early 15th century and created great excitement among Renaissance artists. Oil paint dried slowly, and was translucent, meaning light could shine through the paint. The characteristics of oil paint allowed artists to build layers of color and create paintings with the appearance of greater depth.

The Humanists of the Renaissance and their exploration of the belief that human beings can live full and happy lives before they go to heaven is still with us. Many aspects of the lives we lead, including the way school is taught and the subjects that we study, began in the Renaissance and continue to influence the way we live today.