URBINO:
AN ITALIAN RENAISSANCE CENTER
URBINO, ITALY

- Walled city in Marche region of Italy
- Not far from the Adriatic Sea – central east side in Italy
- Around 1200 came under control of the House of Montefeltro
- Birthplace of the Italian Renaissance painter Raphael
- Most famous landmark is the Ducal Palace built during the height of the Renaissance
The Duke & Duchess of Montefeltro – Federico & Battista

One of the most famous Italian Renaissance diptych paintings, it was once combined and was commissioned after Battista’s death in 1473.

It is the 1st portrait with a natural background.

Done by the famous artist Pierro della Francesca.
Federico da Montefeltro (1422-82)

- Called “the light of Italy”
- Was a great condottieri – lost an eye in battle
- Created one of the greatest, refined courts of the Renaissance
- Commissioned the Ducal Palace
- Collected books & art
- May’ve been involved in conspiracy to wipe out the Medici
- Was probably the richest man in Italy – wealthier than the Medici
Battista Sforza Montefeltro

• Daughter of the Duke of Milan
• Was 13 when she wed the Duke of Urbino
• Humanist educated
• Had 9 children – 8 girls & 1 boy
• Visited the popes in Rome, including Pius II, the 1st humanist pope
• Often ran the dukedom while her husband was off fighting
• Oversaw the Ducal Palace’s construction
• Became co-ruler with her husband
• Died at age 23
Ducal Palace of Urbino

- Design based on the writings of Renaissance architect Leon Alberti
- Inspired a Neoplatonic journey upward in the design
- Also showcased the Platonic ideal of virtue
- Includes classical arches & squares
- Built in the center of town
- Open & airy
When it was completed in the 1460s, it was declared the most beautiful palace in Italy.
Architects from all over Europe came to see & study it.
It was also open to the public then - unprecedented.
• Courtyard of Honour – symbol of rebirth
• Palace is very vertical and displays geometric forms
• 400 rooms, 90 fireplaces, 600 doors & windows
• Includes many great works of art by Pierro della Francesca, among others
• Is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site
Urbino Palace Fireplaces

- One fireplace depicts Hercules
- Photo above taken by Mr. Lenihan shows dancing cupids & angels
The Library

- Grandest in Renaissance Europe
- Surpassed the collections at Oxford Univ. and the Vatican
- Contained over 1,000 volumes
- Texts include history, religion, art of war, Bibles, Greek & Latin works
- Cost 10,000 ducats to collect classical texts
- The duke employed 20 scribes
- When the collection was finished in 1470, the public was invited
- Plundered in 1502 by Cesare Borgia
It didn’t contain a throne until the residency of the Papal Legate. Its original purpose was to host celebrations. Completed prior to 1474.
The Court of Urbino

- Supposed to be a model court
- Had military drills
- Had a barbershop and pharmacy
- Music included a choir and organists
- The duke and his wife did not have separate apartments which was rare for back then
- Because Federico was so wealthy, citizens of Urbino didn’t pay taxes
- Setting for *The Book of the Courtier*
“On the slopes of the Apennines towards the Adriatic, almost in the center of Italy, is situated, as is well known, the little city of Urbino.”

Castiglione goes on to praise Federico as prudent, humane, just, a military victor who never lost a single battle, who can be compared “to many famous men among the ancients”
The ideal city, attr. Luciano Laurana