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The Cover

Antonio Allegri (1494-1534), called Correggio after his birthplace, was a master of the Italian High Renaissance style, with its emphasis on the human figure and the formulation of new laws of perspective. *Virgin and Child With St John the Baptist* (cover) was painted in 1515, only 12 years after Leonardo did the *Mona Lisa*, and indeed, the deeply meditative expression of the Virgin is reminiscent of the mysterious *Mona Lisa* countenance. Correggio has placed the Virgin diagonally to the plane of the picture with her torso turned to be parallel with it. The perspective is emphasized by the figure of the Baptist, which casts a shadow on the leg of the Child, and the trellis, set along an axis diagonal to the lower part of the Virgin's body. But beyond the heroic impression of the three figures, attained by their triangular placement and extreme forward projection, the even more remarkable aspect is Correggio's colors, which have remained exceptionally brilliant. Micro-analytic study has shown that he used only seven pigments, obtaining the rich and sensuous tones by layering.

Correggio's works may be seen in only six US cities: New York, Detroit, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago. The Chicago painting (cover) was bought for half a million dollars in 1965, but within months after being put on public display was stolen—at that time a calamity second only to theft of the *Mona Lisa* from the Louvre 55 years earlier. Unlike the *Mona Lisa*, however, it was recovered only 17 hours later (from a trash can), but the priceless Italian frame had been broken in two, and the poplar panel had a long crack that ran through the left cheek of the Virgin; there were also various abrasions, principally in the shadows of the Virgin's hair and at the top and bottom of the panel. Fortunately, the damage was not irreparable, and the painting was rehung a year later, where it has been enjoyed by thousands of visitors yearly and is one of the most popular Christmas card reproductions of the Art Institute.—M. THERESE SOUTHGATE, MD

(Antonio Allegri, called Correggio. *Virgin and Child With St John the Baptist*, probably 1515. Oil on panel. 64.2x50.4 cm. Used with permission, Art Institute of Chicago. Photograph by Joe Fletcher.)

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