



# Arcimboldo

1526 – 1593

NATURE AND FANTASY

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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**FIG. 1**



**FIG. 2**



**FIG. 3**

**FIG. 1**  
GIUSEPPE  
ARCIBOLDO,  
*Winter*, 1563

**FIG. 2**  
GIUSEPPE  
ARCIBOLDO,  
*Spring*, 1563

**FIG. 3**  
GIUSEPPE  
ARCIBOLDO,  
*Summer*, 1563

## INTRODUCTION

Anyone looking at Arcimboldo's composite heads for the first time feels surprised, startled, and bewildered; our gaze moves back and forth between the overall human form and the richness of individual details until we get the joke and find ourselves amused, delighted, or perhaps even repelled. Any transformation or manipulation of the human face attracts attention, but the effect is accentuated when we are confronted with monsters where, instead of eyes, mouths, noses, and cheeks, we find flowers or cherries, peas, cucumbers, peaches, broken branches, and much else (FIGS. 1–3). Arcimboldo's paintings stimulate opposing, irreconcilable interpretations of what we are seeing and thus are paradoxical in the truest sense of the word.

Soon forgotten after his death, Arcimboldo was rediscovered in the 1930s when the director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Alfred H. Barr, included the artist's paintings in the exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*. Ever since, Arcimboldo has been considered a source of inspiration for the surrealists and their successors. Art historians have also seen him as a typical representative of mannerism, a term used to describe an artistic style fashionable at European courts in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Mannerist painters rejected the rational, harmonious approach of much Renaissance art in favor of ambiguity, virtuosity, and elegance. Along with their patrons, they prized artifice, cleverness, obscure symbolism, and intellectual puzzles—all qualities found in Arcimboldo's paintings.

Arcimboldo's composite heads were already celebrated as *scherzi* (jokes) by his contemporaries, but they also reflect the serious scientific study of nature that was characteristic of the sixteenth century. The precision with which Arcimboldo rendered flora and fauna typifies contemporary botanical illustrations, such as those by Jacques Le Moyne (FIG. 4) and Domenico Buonvicini (FIG. 5). In their quest for scientific accuracy, sculptors and ceramicists even incorporated casts of reptiles and fish made from actual specimens in their works (FIGS. 6, 7).

## Nature Studies

The rise of the new sciences of botany, horticulture, and zoology in the sixteenth century focused artists' attention on the natural world to an extent not seen since antiquity. During the Renaissance, a renewed interest in the natural world had led artists to depict animals and plants with great accuracy, as seen in Dürer's *Tuft of Cowslips* (fig. 8). The study of flora and fauna intensified as a result of the sixteenth-century voyages of exploration and discovery to the New World, Africa, and Asia. The exotic plants and animals that explorers and traders brought to the courts of Europe created an explosion of interest in the study of nature. Specimens were examined and dissected. Artists captured not only the blossoms of flowering plants but also their stem and root structures.

Some of the finest Italian nature studies were created by Jacopo Ligozzi, who made a series of animal paintings—similar to his later *Marmot* (fig. 9)—for the Habsburg court of Maximilian II in Vienna. He then worked in Florence where he met the great naturalist Ulisse Aldrovandi, whose volumes on natural history were illustrated with engravings, including several after drawings by Arcimboldo.



FIG. 4



FIG. 7



FIG. 5



FIG. 8



FIG. 6



FIG. 9



**FIG. 10**



**FIG. II**



**FIG. 13**



**FIG. 12**

**FIG. 4**  
JACQUES  
LE MOYNE  
DE MORGUES,  
*Damask Rose*,  
c. 1570

**FIG. 5**  
DOMENICO  
BUONVICINI,  
*Florilegium*  
(Title Page),  
1601

**FIG. 6**  
PADUAN,  
*Box in the Form*  
*of a Crab*, early  
16th century

**FIG. 7**  
BERNARD  
PALISSY, *Platter*,  
last quarter of  
the 16th century

**FIG. 8**  
ALBRECHT  
DÜRER, *Tuft*  
*of Cowslips*, 1526

**FIG. 9**  
JACOPO  
LIGOZZI,  
*A Marmot with*  
*a Branch of*  
*Plums*, 1605

**FIG. 10**  
LEONARDO  
DA VINCI,  
*Grotesque Head*  
*of an Old Woman*,  
c. 1490–1510

**FIG. II**  
LEONARDO  
DA VINCI,  
*Snub-Nosed*  
*Old Man*,  
c. 1490–1510

**FIG. 12**  
JORIS  
HOEFNAGEL,  
*Elephant*,  
c. 1575/1580

**FIG. 13**  
HANS  
HOFFMANN,  
*Red Squirrel*,  
1578

### Maximilian II

Maximilian II (1527–1576) of the Austrian House of Habsburg became Holy Roman Emperor in 1564. From Vienna, he ruled over Austria, Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, and other parts of eastern Europe. As a young man, Maximilian was educated in Madrid at the court of his uncle, Charles V. When he returned home, his entourage included an elephant, the first ever seen in Vienna. Maximilian, a Catholic, was known for his policy of religious tolerance toward Protestantism as well as for his sharp intellect, pacifist tendencies, and linguistic proficiency (he was fluent in six languages). He was particularly interested in the natural sciences and attracted eminent botanists and other scientists to his court. The botanical gardens and zoos that he established on his estates would have allowed Arcimboldo to study firsthand many of the species of plants and animals that appear in his paintings.

### BIOGRAPHY

Giuseppe Arcimboldo was born in Milan in 1526, the son of the painter Biagio, and was active there and in the nearby cities of Como and Monza before moving to Vienna, the seat of the Holy Roman Empire, in 1562. He was appointed court painter and portraitist to Maximilian II, who became emperor in 1564. After the emperor's death in 1576, Arcimboldo was retained by the emperor's son and successor, Rudolf II. When the imperial residence was moved from Vienna to Prague in 1583, the artist emigrated there as well. In 1585 he began petitioning to return to his homeland, a request that was granted in 1587. Arcimboldo, then sixty-one years old, returned to Milan, though he had not yet been released from his service to Rudolf II. The artist continued working on paintings for the emperor as well as on other commissions, and in 1592 Rudolf II appointed him a Palatine count. Arcimboldo died the following year from kidney failure.

### EARLY CAREER

The artist was already thirty-six years old when he left Milan, the capital of Lombardy, and he had the city and its culture to thank for his artistic education and career. Lombardy is considered the cradle of naturalism, a mode of artistic expression based on the direct observation of nature and shaped by Leonardo da Vinci, who spent seventeen years in Milan as court artist to Duke Ludovico Sforza. Leonardo's studies of nature in all its variety profoundly influenced Milanese artists, and his style dominated the artistic scene well beyond the middle of the sixteenth century. Leonardo's "grotesque" heads of old men and women, which he had intended to serve as material for a treatise on physiognomy, are considered an essential source of inspiration for Arcimboldo's bizarre paintings (FIGS. 10, 11).

Like his father, Arcimboldo was active in the workshop of Milan Cathedral, where he is documented between 1549 and 1558. In addition to making designs for stained-glass windows, he executed frescoes, banners, coats of arms, and much more, although with the exception of a few of the windows, none of

this work has survived. Beginning in 1556 he worked on frescoes in the Cathedral of Monza, and in 1560 he delivered a cartoon for a tapestry to the Como Cathedral. As most of these were designs for works carried out in different media by other artists, they give no convincing idea of Arcimboldo's own style.

How Arcimboldo achieved such fame that Maximilian summoned him to Vienna remains a mystery. Perhaps he had already made a name for himself in Milan as an illustrator of flora and fauna in the tradition of Leonardo. Among Arcimboldo's studies of animals, birds, and plants recently discovered in albums in libraries and museums in Vienna, Dresden, and Bologna, there is a drawing of salamanders and a dead chameleon dated 1553, when Arcimboldo was still living in Milan. Additional studies are dated 1562, the year of his arrival in Vienna. As these early drawings demonstrate, his activity as an illustrator of natural specimens was an essential prerequisite for the creation of his composite heads of the Four Seasons and Four Elements.

#### THE FOUR SEASONS

Arcimboldo created for Maximilian II a series of allegorical paintings of the Four Seasons, all depicted as profile busts. *Winter* (FIG. 1) and *Summer* (FIG. 3) date to 1563, the year after he arrived in Vienna, and the same is probably true of *Spring* (FIG. 2). *Autumn* is lost but known from a copy by Arcimboldo himself (FIG. 20). *Winter*, one of the most expressive heads, is reminiscent of Leonardo's grotesques: out of an ancient, gnarled tree trunk, the nose and ear emerge as remnants of broken branches, the narrowed eye is created by a crack in the bark, and a tree fungus forms the lips. The bristly hair is a tangle of boughs entwined with ivy. A twig with a dangling lemon and orange protrudes from the figure's chest. Woven into the straw mantle are fire strikers, symbols of the chivalric Order of the Golden Fleece, which was under Habsburg leadership. The large M, partially visible at the back of the cloak, alludes to Maximilian II, whose tomb was recently found to contain a mantle with a similar M woven into it.

#### Leonardo's Grotesque Heads

Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), Arcimboldo's predecessor in Milan, devoted considerable time as court artist to physiognomic studies. They include small, rapidly executed pen-and-ink sketches of grotesque heads drawn from his imagination. Representing manifold types of ugliness, they are composed of exaggerated features, such as a hooked nose, bulging forehead, or receding chin, that recur in various combinations. In light of the Renaissance equation of virtue with beauty, Leonardo's grotesque heads have the negative connotation of evil. Anticipating Arcimboldo, they were also clearly intended to be humorous. Leonardo's grotesque heads were much admired by his contemporaries. In particular, the master's pupil and heir, Francesco Melzi (1493–c. 1570), made faithful copies that circulated widely and inspired later generations of artists. Arcimboldo was no doubt familiar with this tradition of grotesque heads going back to Leonardo.

In the case of *Spring*, blossoms make up the head, and leaves form the shoulder and chest. The lips and teeth are delicately rendered; special accents include the lily as a hat feather and the iris as a chest medallion. In all, eighty different varieties of flowering plants have been identified in the work. Because they do not all bloom at the same time of year, Arcimboldo must have prepared studies of the individual species when each one blossomed, and then put them together in the painting.

*Summer*, with its luxuriant display of fruit, vegetables, nuts, and grains, can be viewed almost as a guide to what foods would have then been locally available. The artist also included rare varieties imported from the New World, such as corn (not cultivated in Europe until 1525) or eggplant, first cultivated in Andalusia, but which came from Africa and Arabia and was unusual in northern Europe. The artist's signature and date are artfully "woven" into the figure's straw coat, probably an allusion to the ancient Roman author Pliny the Elder's reference to the classical Greek painter Zeuxis, who became so wealthy that he had his name woven into his outer garments in golden letters.

Maximilian made his court a center of scientific study, bringing together scholars from across Europe. He established botanical and zoological gardens with elephants, lions, and tigers that caused a sensation. Surviving letters reveal how impatiently the emperor awaited the delivery of new kinds of animals. A particularly rare Aplomado falcon arrived from Spain in 1575, and Arcimboldo immediately painted its "portrait." Although some artists, such as Joris Hoefnagel, delighted in depicting exotic creatures (FIG. 12), the most captivating nature studies often featured common species, such as Hans Hoffmann's *Red Squirrel* (FIG. 13). Plants were carefully observed and drawn, as Maximilian was particularly interested in their healing powers. Artists throughout Europe were hired to render plants, fish, birds, and mammals with the utmost realism so that each species could be classified and clearly distinguished from others. Therefore, when Arcimboldo allowed a rare Persian lily to wilt because he preferred to attend a wedding, he was seriously reprimanded.

## THE FOUR ELEMENTS

Arcimboldo also created for Maximilian a series of paintings personifying the Four Elements — Earth, Air, Fire, and Water — which were believed in antiquity to compose all matter. The series is among Arcimboldo's most extraordinary creations. Like the Seasons, the Elements are represented as profile portraits. The two series were evidently intended to be paired with each other, with *Air* associated with the warm breezes of spring, *Fire* with the heat of summer, *Earth* with the dryness of autumn, and *Water* with the dampness of winter.

*Earth* (FIG. 14) consists of a myriad of intertwined mammals, for which many of the preparatory drawings have survived, including those for the wild boar, elk, red deer, fallow deer, and black buck. In the painting, Arcimboldo's animals assume complex positions in order to form, for example, the eye or the neck. Several details make unambiguous reference to the House of Habsburg, such as the crown-forming antlers, the lion skin of Hercules, and the ram skin symbolizing the Order of the Golden Fleece. The allegory of *Air* is known only from copies, as Arcimboldo's original version has not survived. The portrait is made up entirely of birds, with special prominence given to the imperial eagle and the peacock, both of which symbolize Maximilian and the House of Habsburg.

In *Fire* (FIG. 15) the crown of hair blazes away above the assemblage of fire-making instruments that constitute this profile bust. The cheek is a large flint, and the neck and chin consist of a burning candle and an oil lamp. Fire strikers shape the nose and ear. Kindling chips infused with wax form the mustache, and the eye is a candle stub. The chest is fashioned out of firearms: gun barrels, cannons, and a gunpowder scoop; above them lies the collar of the Golden Fleece, with the pendant double eagle of the House of Habsburg referring to Maximilian.

The profile head of *Water* (FIG. 16) contains more than sixty different fish and aquatic animals, most of which are of Mediterranean origin. The scale of the creatures depicted is inaccurate. The walrus and monk seal are extremely small in comparison



FIG. 14



FIG. 15



FIG. 16

**FIG. 14**  
GIUSEPPE  
ARCIBOLDO,  
*Earth*, 1566(?)

**FIG. 15**  
GIUSEPPE  
ARCIBOLDO,  
*Fire*, 1566

**FIG. 16**  
GIUSEPPE  
ARCIBOLDO,  
*Water*, 1566

to the sea horse, just as Arcimboldo's crab is too large in comparison to the turtle that forms part of the figure's chest. The wittiness of the composition is striking, as, for instance, in the way the open jaw of a shark forms the mouth and the eye actually belongs to an ocean sunfish.

These paintings of the Seasons and the Elements appear to be an encyclopedia of the plants and animals that Maximilian acquired for his botanical garden and menagerie, all of which were studied by court scientists. That Arcimboldo chose to represent flora and fauna as allegories of the Seasons and the Elements was not unusual for the time. What was new was to present these allegorical images as composite heads, although the basic principle of the composite head precedes Arcimboldo. We can find heads assembled from diverse objects in ancient and Renaissance art, on medals portraying famous literary figures, and even on majolica plates. According to the sixteenth-century art historian Giorgio Vasari, Renaissance artists also played creatively with comestibles, and during carnival celebrations people occasionally wore edible goods on their heads. Arcimboldo drew on all these ideas to create his ingenious paintings.

Arcimboldo must have wanted to express his delight and gratitude at being able to serve a patron of the arts such as Maximilian, and he sought to do so in a highly original way that emphasized his own particular artistic abilities. But he evidently proceeded cautiously: the symbolic references to the Habsburgs are restrained in the Seasons series, becoming overt only in the later Elements. Still, Arcimboldo may not have been confident that his monstrous creations would be understood as praise of the ruler, and he likely solicited the help of humanist scholar Giovanni Battista Fonteo. In 1566 Arcimboldo returned to Italy for several months. On New Year's Day in 1569, after the artist was back at the Viennese court, he presented the emperor with both series — the Four Seasons and the Four Elements — along with an effusive poem by Fonteo, who probably accompanied Arcimboldo when he returned from Milan. In the more than 308 stanzas of this hymn of praise, Fonteo interprets the paintings

**FIG. 17**  
GIUSEPPE  
ARCIMBOLDO,  
*Winter, 1573*



**FIG. 17**

**FIG. 18**  
GIUSEPPE  
ARCIMBOLDO,  
*Spring, 1573*



**FIG. 18**

**FIG. 19**  
GIUSEPPE  
ARCIMBOLDO,  
*Summer, 1573*



**FIG. 19**

**FIG. 20**  
GIUSEPPE  
ARCIMBOLDO,  
*Autumn, 1573*



**FIG. 20**

of the Seasons and the Elements as political allegories. They represent a microcosm of the universe and proclaim the Habsburg empire to be eternal like the cycle of the seasons. Further, the disparate creatures and plants that coexist harmoniously in Arcimboldo's composite heads symbolize the peace and prosperity of Maximilian's magnificent reign.

In the end, the emperor was so pleased with Arcimboldo's creations that he displayed them in his *kunstkammer*, which was called an "Archive of Wisdom." He also sent out replicas, propaganda for his reign and the art of his court, to his relatives and other rulers in Madrid, Munich, and Dresden. Maximilian commissioned Arcimboldo himself to create a copy of the Four Seasons (FIGS. 17 – 20) as a gift to Augustus, the elector of Saxony, a Protestant prince loyal to the Catholic Habsburgs. The floral borders framing each of the four works were added by a later artist.

## THE PROFESSIONS

Arcimboldo drew on the idea of the composite for various categories of portraits. He represented professional activities through objects associated with each occupation, ingeniously characterizing court officials through the items that designated their office. In *The Librarian* (FIG. 21), a portrait of the famous court historian Wolfgang Lazius, an open book provides his full head of hair, feather dusters his beard, keys his eyes, and bookmarks his fingers — perhaps an allusion to Lazius' work as an author of approximately fifty volumes.

In *The Jurist* (FIG. 22), a portrait of the vice chancellor Ulrich Zasius, a cooked chicken forms his face, a naked hatching his nose and eyes, a fish's mouth his own, and a fish tail his chin. Perhaps the portrait alludes to slippery legal practices or to gluttony, yet Zasius' face might actually have been disfigured when he was thrown from a runaway carriage. There may have been other reasons why this vice chancellor would have been the target of court ridicule and the subject of such an ugly caricature. Perhaps Zasius made enemies when he prevented

## The Kunstkammer

Arcimboldo's composite heads were displayed in the *kunstkammer* (literally, "art chamber") of Maximilian II and, later, that of Rudolf II. A precursor of modern museums, the *kunstkammer* housed private collections of paintings, sculpture, Greek and Roman antiquities, coins, scientific instruments, and precious objects made of gold, silver, ivory, amber, rock crystal, and gems. Often a *kunstkammer* juxtaposed marvelous man-made works with wondrous curiosities of nature. The voyages of exploration to the New World and Asia spawned a fascination for exotic specimens and materials, such as nautilus shell, tortoiseshell, ostrich eggs, coral, and coconuts, which were fashioned into works of art. With collections of such breadth, the *kunstkammer* was a microcosm of the world as it was then known: a sixteenth-century observer described Maximilian's as an encyclopedia of "all earthly existence."

**FIG. 21**  
GIUSEPPE  
ARCIMBOLDO,  
*The Librarian*,  
c. 1566(?)

**FIG. 22**  
GIUSEPPE  
ARCIMBOLDO,  
*The Jurist*, 1566



**FIG. 21**



**FIG. 22**

the open-minded Catholic emperor from acquiring Protestant books. In any case, the painting was a success. According to Arcimboldo's friend Gregorio Comanini, "Of the pleasure it gave the emperor and the laughter it provoked at court, there is no need for me to tell you."

#### REVERSIBLE PICTURES

Part of Arcimboldo's genius lay in his clever renderings of subjects that can change completely depending on the angle from which they are viewed. In addition to his personifications of the Seasons, which are also anthropomorphic still lifes, the artist painted still lifes of roasted meats on a platter (FIG. 23) and of vegetables (FIG. 25). In these works Arcimboldo has incorporated another trick: when the pictures are turned upside-down, they surprise us with a comic face. These are thus "reversible" pictures. The roasted meats become the head of a cook (FIG. 24), and the vegetable still life becomes a gardener (FIG. 26). In this way they are paradoxical images, since when we see the face we do not see the still life, and vice versa. Reversible pictures date back to antiquity. Plutarch tells of the painter Pauson, who was commissioned to depict a galloping horse but instead presented his patron with an image of a horse rolling on its back. When the patron became angry, Pauson turned the picture upside-down and had the last laugh. Among humanists these stories were well known, and Fonteo may have transmitted them to Arcimboldo.

#### THE FINAL DECADES

Arcimboldo spent most of the last two decades of his career in the service of Emperor Rudolf II, working in Vienna, Prague, and, after the artist returned home in 1587, Milan. According to the sixteenth-century Milanese historian Paolo Morigia, Emperor Rudolf's collections contained "portraits of all members of the Austrian court painted by the divine hand of our Arcimboldo." Yet no such likenesses by Arcimboldo survive today and no extant paintings by him are known to date from his years in Prague.

#### Rudolf II

Rudolf II (1552–1612) succeeded his father, Maximilian, as Holy Roman Emperor in 1576. In 1583, Rudolf moved the imperial capital from Vienna to the flourishing city of Prague, which became the cultural heart of the empire, drawing artists, philosophers, scientists, and mathematicians from across Europe. Fascinated by astrology and alchemy, then considered legitimate sciences, he brought the astronomers Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler to Prague, where they established observatories. More interested in the arts and humanities than affairs of state, Rudolf amassed the most extraordinary art collection of his day. It included thousands of paintings by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century artists, among them Arcimboldo, whose works reflect the lively interchange between artists and scientists that occurred at Rudolf's court.



FIG. 23



FIG. 24

**FIGS. 25, 26**  
GIUSEPPE  
ARCIMBOLDO,  
*The Vegetable  
Gardener*, c. 1590



**FIG. 25**



**FIG. 26**

Many of the artist's drawings from that time are preserved, however, and include studies of animals and plants kept in the Prague menageries. In addition, Arcimboldo presented Rudolf with four albums (only one of which survives) of drawings depicting parade costumes and imaginative floats for pageants, tournaments, and festivals that the artist designed for the entertainment of the imperial court. As an expert in the fine arts as well as in the "wonders of nature," Arcimboldo also traveled widely on the emperor's behalf to acquire works of art, precious objects, and natural curiosities for the imperial *kunstkammer*.

Arcimboldo's surviving paintings for Rudolf II were created in Milan and may include the reversible *Vegetable Gardener* (FIG. 26). The most renowned work from the artist's late period depicts the emperor in the guise of Vertumnus, the ancient Roman god of the seasons and vegetation (see cover). The painting inspired several poems of praise, including two by Arcimboldo himself, which were collected in a booklet that accompanied *Vertumnus* when it was sent to Prague in 1591. Another of the poems, written by the artist's friend Comanini, explains that the painting was conceived in homage to Rudolf: the luxuriant blossoms and ripe fruits that make up the figure symbolize the prosperity and harmony of his reign, which marked the return of a golden age. The painting conveyed its serious message with humor: according to Comanini, the sight of *Vertumnus* elicited much laughter at court.

Among Arcimboldo's last works is *Four Seasons in One Head* (FIG. 27), a gift to Comanini. The naked tree trunk represents winter, a season that produces nothing yet enjoys the bounties of the others — the flowers of spring; the cherries, wheat, and plums of summer; and the apples and grapes of autumn. On a branch among the apples, Arcimboldo inscribed his name in the wood beneath the bark that has been stripped away, raising the possibility that the painting is a cryptic self-portrait. Was the artist, who had then reached the winter of his career, brooding over his own bygone seasons?

**FIG. 27**  
GIUSEPPE  
ARCIMBOLDO,  
*Four Seasons*  
*in One Head*,  
c. 1590



**FIG. 27**

## Checklist

### PAINTINGS

**1. Winter, 1563**

oil on panel  
66.6 × 50.5 cm  
(26<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 19<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.)  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Vienna,  
inv. no. 1590

**FIG. 1**

**2. Spring, 1563**

oil on panel  
65 × 50 cm  
(25<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 19<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.)  
Museo de la Real  
Academia de Bellas  
Artes de San Fernando,  
Madrid, inv. no. 606

**FIG. 2**

**3. Summer, 1563**

oil on panel  
67 × 50.8 cm  
(26<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 20 in.)  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Vienna,  
inv. no. 1589

**FIG. 3**

**4. Fire, 1566**

oil on panel  
66.5 × 50.8 cm  
(26<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 20 in.)  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Vienna,  
inv. no. 1585

**FIG. 15**

**5. Water, 1566**

oil on panel  
66.5 × 50.5 cm  
(26<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 19<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.)  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Vienna,  
inv. no. 1586

**FIG. 16**

**6. Earth, 1566(?)**

oil on panel  
70.2 × 48.7 cm  
(27<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 19<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.)  
Private collection  
**FIG. 14**  
(not in exhibition)

**7. Winter, 1573**

oil on canvas  
76 × 63.5 cm  
(29<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 25 in.)  
Musée du Louvre,  
Paris, Département  
des Peintures, inv.  
no. R.F. 1964-33

**FIG. 17**

**8. Spring, 1573**

oil on canvas  
76 × 63.5 cm  
(29<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 25 in.)  
Musée du Louvre,  
Paris, Département  
des Peintures, inv.  
no. R.F. 1964-30

**FIG. 18**

**9. Summer, 1573**

oil on canvas  
76 × 63.5 cm  
(29<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 25 in.)  
Musée du Louvre,  
Paris, Département  
des Peintures, inv.  
no. R.F. 1964-31

**FIG. 19**

**10. Autumn, 1573**

oil on canvas  
76 × 63.5 cm  
(29<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 25 in.)  
Musée du Louvre,  
Paris, Département  
des Peintures, inv.  
no. R.F. 1964-32

**FIG. 20**

**11. The Jurist, 1566**

oil on canvas  
64 × 51 cm  
(25<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 20<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.)  
Nationalmuseum,  
Stockholm, NMGrh 1227

**FIG. 22**

**12. The Cook, 1570**

oil on panel  
52.5 × 41 cm  
(20<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 16<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.)  
Nationalmuseum,  
Stockholm, NM 6897

**FIGS. 23, 24**

**13. The Librarian,**

c. 1566(?)  
oil on canvas  
97 × 71 cm  
(38<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 27<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.)  
Skokloster Castle,  
Skokloster

**FIG. 21**

**14. The Vegetable**

*Gardener*, c. 1590  
oil on panel  
35.8 × 24.2 cm  
(14<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.)  
Museo Civico "Ala  
Ponzone," Cremona,  
inv. no. 211

**FIGS. 25, 26**

**15. Reversible Head  
with Basket of Fruit,**

c. 1590  
oil on panel  
55.9 × 41.6 cm  
(22 × 16<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.)  
French & Company,  
New York

**FIG. 28**

**16. Vertumnus, c. 1590**

oil on panel  
68 × 56 cm  
(26<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 22<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.)  
Skokloster Castle,  
Skokloster

**COVER**

**17. Four Seasons in**

*One Head*, c. 1590  
oil on panel  
60.4 × 44.7 cm  
(23<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 17<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.)  
Private collection,  
Courtesy of Pandora  
Old Masters Inc.

**FIG. 27**

### DRAWINGS

**18. Albrecht Dürer,**

*German, 1471–1528*  
*Tuft of Cowslips*, 1526  
gouache on vellum  
19.3 × 16.8 cm  
(7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 6<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.)  
National Gallery  
of Art, Washington,  
The Armand Hammer  
Collection, 1991.217.1

**FIG. 8**



**FIG. 28**

GIUSEPPE  
ARCIMBOLDO,  
*Reversible Head  
with Basket of  
Fruit*, c. 1590

**19.** Hans Hoffmann,  
German, c. 1545/  
1550–1591/1592  
*Red Squirrel*, 1578  
watercolor and gouache  
over traces of graphite  
on vellum  
25 × 17.8 cm  
(9<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 7 in.)  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, Woodner  
Collection, 1991.182.5

**FIG. 13**

**20.** Hans Hoffmann,  
German, c. 1545/  
1550–1591/1592  
*Left Wing of a Blue  
Roller*, c. 1580  
watercolor and  
gouache on parchment  
18.9 × 23.9 cm  
(7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.)  
Dian Woodner  
Collection, Intended  
Gift to the National  
Gallery of Art,  
Washington

**21.** Leonardo da Vinci,  
Italian, 1452–1519  
*Grotesque Head  
of an Old Woman*,  
c. 1490–1510  
pen and brown ink  
on paper  
6.4 × 5.1 cm  
(2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 2 in.)  
Dian Woodner  
Collection, Intended  
Gift to the National  
Gallery of Art,  
Washington

**FIG. 10**

**22.** Leonardo da Vinci,  
Italian, 1452–1519  
*Snub-Nosed Old Man  
with a Cowled Hat in  
Bust-Length Profile*,  
c. 1490–1510  
pen and ink on paper  
6.35 × 5.4 cm  
(2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.)  
Private collection

**FIG. 11**

**23.** Leonardo da Vinci,  
Italian, 1452–1519  
*Old Woman with  
Beetling Brow, Wearing  
a Tall Pointy Hat, in  
Bust-Length Profile*,  
c. 1490–1510  
pen and ink on paper  
6.9 × 5.6 cm  
(2<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.)  
Private collection

**24.** Jacopo Ligozzi,  
Italian, 1547–1627  
*A Marmot with a Branch  
of Plums*, 1605  
pen and brown ink  
with gouache on paper  
38 × 44.1 cm  
(15 × 17<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.)  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, Wolfgang  
Ratjen Collection,  
Purchased as the Gift of  
Helen Porter and James  
T. Dyke, 2007.111.121

**FIG. 9**

**25.** Francesco Melzi,  
Italian, 1493–c. 1570  
after Leonardo da Vinci,  
Italian, 1452–1519  
*Two Grotesque Heads*,  
c. 1520(?)  
pen and brown ink  
on paper  
4.5 × 9.9 cm  
(1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 3<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.)  
National Gallery  
of Art, Washington,  
Gift of Mrs. Edward  
Fowles, 1980.63.1

**26.** Attributed to  
Parmigianino,  
Italian, 1503–1540  
*A Desiccated Rat*,  
c. 1540(?)  
red chalk on paper  
15 × 22.3 cm  
(5<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.)  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, Joseph F.  
McCrinkle Collection,  
2009.70.26

**MANUSCRIPTS  
AND BOOKS**

**27.** *Blackbuck Antelope*  
in Ulisse Aldrovandi,  
*Quadrupedum Omnium  
Bisulcorum Historia*,  
Bologna, 1621  
open: 37 × 49.3 cm  
(14<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 19<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.)  
Joseph F. Cullman  
3rd Library of Natural  
History, Smithsonian  
Institution Libraries,  
Washington

**28.** *Three-Footed Chickens*  
in Ulisse Aldrovandi,  
*Ornithologiae*, volume 2  
of 3, Bologna, 1599–1603  
open: 36.5 × 50 cm  
(14<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 19<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.)  
Joseph F. Cullman  
3rd Library of Natural  
History, Smithsonian  
Institution Libraries,  
Washington

**FIG. 29**  
Gourds in  
Leonhart Fuchs,  
*De Historia*  
*Stirpium*  
*Commentarii*  
*Insignes*, 1542



**29.** Domenico Buonvicini, Italian, active late 16th – early 17th century  
*Title Page with Flowers in Florilegium*, 1601  
watercolor on paper  
open: 34.93 × 46.99 cm  
(13 3/4 × 18 1/2 in.)  
Mrs. Paul Mellon,  
Oak Spring Garden  
Library, Upperville

**FIG. 5**

**30.** Gourds in Leonhart Fuchs, *De Historia Stirpium Commentarii Insignes*, Basel, 1542  
hand-colored woodcut on paper  
open: 38.42 × 55.88 cm  
(15 1/8 × 22 in.)  
Mrs. Paul Mellon,  
Oak Spring Garden  
Library, Upperville

**FIG. 29**

**31.** Giovanna Garzoni, Italian, 1600 – 1670  
*Banana Plant (Musa) in Piantae Varie*, c. 1650  
Conté crayon, watercolor, gouache, and pen and ink on paper  
open: 48.3 × 38.1 × 4.4 cm  
(19 × 15 × 1 3/4 in.)  
Dumbarton Oaks  
Research Library,  
Washington

**32.** Joris Hoefnagel, Flemish, 1542 – 1600  
*Hairy Man in Animalia Rationalia et Insecta (Ignis)*, volume 1, c. 1575/1580  
watercolor and gouache, with gold oval border, on vellum  
page size: 14.3 × 18.4 cm  
(5 5/8 × 7 1/4 in.)  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, Gift of  
Mrs. Lessing J. Rosenwald, 1987.20.5.2

**33.** Joris Hoefnagel, Flemish, 1542 – 1600  
*Elephant in Animalia Quadrupedia et Reptilia (Terra)*, volume 2, c. 1575/1580  
watercolor and gouache, with gold oval border, on vellum  
page size: 14.3 × 18.4 cm  
(5 5/8 × 7 1/4 in.)  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, Gift of  
Mrs. Lessing J. Rosenwald, 1987.20.6.2

**FIG. 12**

**34.** Joris Hoefnagel, Flemish, 1542 – 1600  
*Sea Turtles in Animalia Aquatilia et Cochiliata (Aqua)*, volume 3, c. 1575/1580  
watercolor and gouache, with gold oval border, on vellum  
page size: 14.3 × 18.4 cm  
(5 5/8 × 7 1/4 in.)  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, Gift of  
Mrs. Lessing J. Rosenwald, 1987.20.7.2

**35.** Joris Hoefnagel, Flemish, 1542 – 1600  
*Heron and Helmeted Curassow in Animalia Volatilia et Amphibia (Aer)*, volume 4, c. 1575/1580  
watercolor and gouache, with gold oval border, on vellum  
page size: 14.3 × 18.4 cm  
(5 5/8 × 7 1/4 in.)  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, Gift of  
Mrs. Lessing J. Rosenwald, 1987.20.8.11

**36.** *Crocus and Helenium* in Pietro Andrea Mattioli, *Commentarii in Sex Libros*, Venice, 1565  
woodcut with silver highlights on paper  
open: 42.55 × 61.6 cm  
(16 3/4 × 24 1/4 in.)  
Mrs. Paul Mellon,  
Oak Spring Garden  
Library, Upperville

**37.** Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues, French, c. 1533 – 1588  
*Damask Rose and Pansy with Insects in Manuscript of Paintings of Flowers, Butterflies, and Insects*, c. 1570  
watercolor and gouache on gold ground on vellum  
open: 11.43 × 16.51 cm  
(4 1/2 × 6 1/2 in.)  
Dumbarton Oaks  
Research Library,  
Washington

**FIG. 4**

#### SCULPTURE

**38.** Attributed to Antonio Abondio, Italian, 1538 – 1591  
*Arabian Camel (or Dromedary)*, c. 1570s/1580s  
lead  
9.6 × 7.9 cm  
(3 3/4 × 3 1/8 in.)  
National Gallery of  
Art, Washington, Gift  
of Lisa Unger Baskin in  
honor of Douglas Lewis,  
2004.51.1

**39.** German 16th Century,  
*Satirical Head of a Pope*,  
c. 1540  
silver  
diameter: 3.4 cm (1 5/16 in.)  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, Eugene L.  
and Marie-Louise Garbaty Fund, 2006.82.2.a

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**40.** German 16th Century,  
*Satirical Head of a Pope*,  
c. 1540  
bronze  
diameter: 2.6 cm (1 in.);  
with integrally cast  
suspension loop:  
3.3 cm (1<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.)  
National Gallery of  
Art, Washington, Gift  
of Lisa Unger Baskin,  
2007.150.5.a

**41.** Giovanni Paolo  
Negroli, Italian,  
active 1525/1565  
*Helmet (Burgonet) in the  
Form of a Dolphin Mask*,  
1540/1545  
iron or steel, embossed  
and chiseled  
29.5 × 20.9 × 31.6 cm  
(11<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 12<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.)  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, Widener  
Collection, 1942.9.355

**42.** Paduan 16th Century,  
*Box in the Form of a Crab*  
bronze  
4.8 × 17.1 × 9.3 cm  
(1<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 3<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.)  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, Samuel  
H. Kress Collection,  
1957.14.86

**FIG. 6**

**43.** Probably Paduan  
16th Century, *A Crab  
on a Toad*  
bronze  
5.5 × 11.3 × 10 cm  
(2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 4<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 3<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.)  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, Samuel  
H. Kress Collection,  
1957.14.87

**44.** Probably Paduan  
16th Century, *Inkwell  
in the Form of a Frog  
beside a Tree Stump*  
bronze  
7.4 × 14.2 × 8.2 cm  
(2<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 5<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.)  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, Samuel  
H. Kress Collection,  
1957.14.89

**45.** Severo da Ravenna,  
Italian, active 1496 –  
1525/1538  
*Siren Candleholder*,  
c. 1510/1530  
bronze  
24 cm (9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.)  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, Gift of  
Patricia Bauman and  
John Landrum Bryant,  
2001.85.1

**46.** Workshop of Severo  
da Ravenna, *A Sea Mon-  
ster*, 1500/1509  
bronze  
8.9 × 22.6 × 13.6 cm  
(3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 8<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.)  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, Samuel  
H. Kress Collection,  
1957.14.75

#### CERAMICS

**47.** Bernard Palissy,  
French, 1510 – 1589  
*Platter*, last quarter  
of the 16th century  
lead-glazed earthenware  
52.07 × 39.37 × 7.1 cm  
(20<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 15<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 2<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.)  
Lent by The Metropoli-  
tan Museum of Art,  
Gift of Julia A. Berwind,  
53.225.52

**FIG. 7**

**48.** After Bernard  
Palissy, *Rustic Plate  
with Crocodile, Snake,  
and Lizard*, 19th century  
lead-glazed earthenware  
35.56 × 43.82 × 7.62 cm  
(14 × 17<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 3 in.)  
The Corcoran Gallery  
of Art, Washington,  
William A. Clark  
Collection, 26.495

Checklist compiled  
by the department  
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National Gallery of Art

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and cover

**FURTHER READING**  
Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, ed.,  
*Arcimboldo (1526–1593)*  
(Milan: Skira Editore, S.p.A.,  
2007).  
Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann,  
*Arcimboldo: Visual Jokes,  
Natural History, and Still-Life  
Painting* (Chicago and London:  
University of Chicago Press,  
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**FRONT COVER**  
GIUSEPPE ARCIMBOLDO,  
*Vertumnus*, c. 1590 (no. 16)

**BACK COVER**  
GIUSEPPE ARCIMBOLDO,  
*Summer* (detail), 1563 (no. 3)

