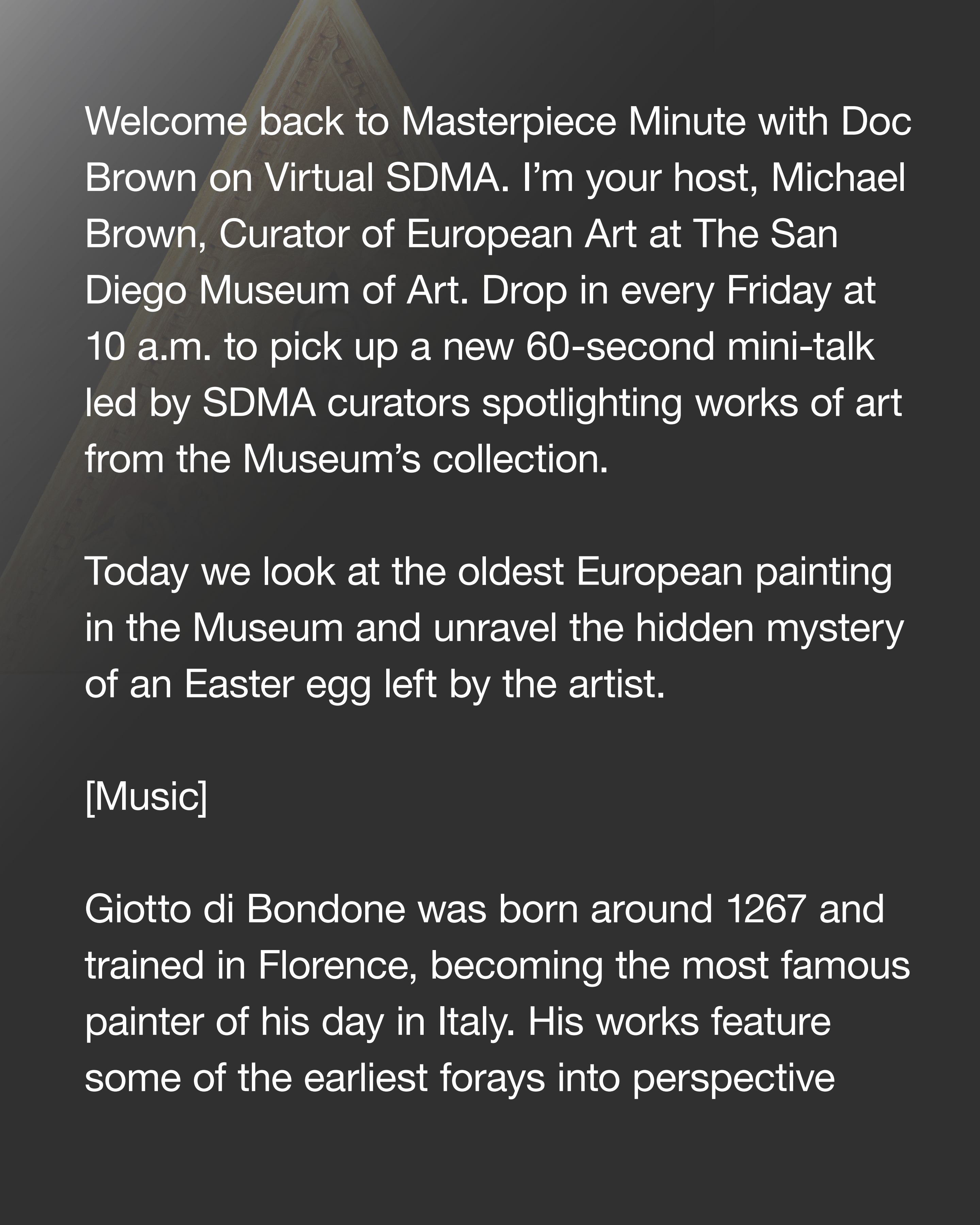


MASTERPIECE
MINUTE





Welcome back to Masterpiece Minute with Doc Brown on Virtual SDMA. I'm your host, Michael Brown, Curator of European Art at The San Diego Museum of Art. Drop in every Friday at 10 a.m. to pick up a new 60-second mini-talk led by SDMA curators spotlighting works of art from the Museum's collection.

Today we look at the oldest European painting in the Museum and unravel the hidden mystery of an Easter egg left by the artist.

[Music]

Giotto di Bondone was born around 1267 and trained in Florence, becoming the most famous painter of his day in Italy. His works feature some of the earliest forays into perspective

and three-dimensionality. This pictorial system would soon form the basis of most Western art until Picasso's Cubism turned it on its head in the 20th century.

Giotto used egg-based tempera, the quick-drying pigment he also used for his pioneering murals in fresco, painted directly on fresh, or wet, plaster.

It was in about 1920 when this particular panel by Giotto was discovered in a Florence antique shop by renowned Harvard historian Bernard Berenson who sent it to New York. Its unusual shape, and the traces of saw marks along its base were clues that it had originally formed part of a larger work. Finally, it was identified in the 1950s as the missing triangular pinnacle of the Baroncelli family altarpiece, which had been cut down in the

1480s as part of a remodel of its Santa Croce chapel.

The two works were not reunited until 2015 when SDMA and Santa Croce lent their works to the Giotto exhibition in Milan, Italy.

And speaking of tempera, what about that Easter egg? Technical analysis done in Milan in 2016 proved that the writing in the book held in God the Father's hands is done in scribe's ink, not painter's tempera, as though it were a real manuscript. It's a brilliant detail Giotto's contemporary viewers could never have detected, but he seems to have left this hidden feature for a future generation to uncover. It only took 700 years!

This has been Doc Brown with Masterpiece Minute. Thanks for joining us here on Virtual SDMA—catch ya next Friday!

BALBOA PARK

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