

## GIUSEPPE ARCIMBOLDO



### **Giuseppe Arcimboldo**

(also spelled Arcimboldi Milan 1527 - 1593) son of Biagio Arcimboldo, was an Italian painter best known for creating imaginative portrait heads made entirely of variety of objects such as fruits, vegetables, flowers, fish, and books - that is, he painted representations of these objects on the canvas arranged in such a way that the whole collection of

objects formed the portrait subject. His natural artistic talent landed him a place as student to the painter Leonardo Da Vinci. Later Arcimboldo accepted a position as Royal Painter in the imperial Court.

Arcimboldo did work in the Duomo and made stained glass window designs. In 1556 he worked with Giuseppe Meda on frescoes for the Cathedral of Monza. In 1558, he drew the sketch for a large tapestry of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, which still hangs in the Como Cathedral today.

Arcimboldo is known as a 16th-century Mannerist. Mannerism is a transitional period from 1520 to 1590 which adopted some artistic elements from the High Renaissance and influenced other elements in the Baroque period. A Mannerist tended to show close relationships between human and nature. Arcimboldo also tried to show his appreciation of nature through his portraits.

Arcimboldo's portraits of human heads were greatly admired by his contemporaries and remain a source of fascination today. It is now debated by art critics whether these paintings were whimsical or a product of a deranged mind.

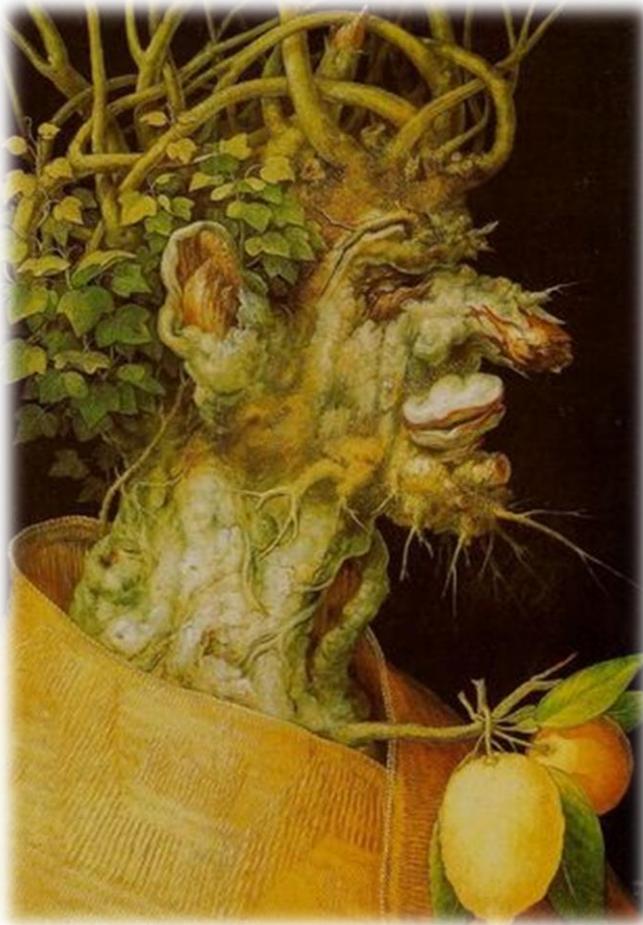
## “VERTUMNUS”



“Vertumnus” is the Roman God of seasons, plant growth, and gardens and fruit trees. Consequently, this portrait named after him is made up of multiple different plants that include vegetables, fruits, and flowers. In the hair, there are grapes of different colors, wheat, cherries, dates, red berries, and a pomegranate. The forehead is a cabbage bottom. The eyebrows and eyelashes have wheat and beans, while the eyes are raspberries. The cheeks are peaches, and the mustache contains of cherries and wheat. The face is

symmetrical, but not the hair. The neck has radishes, cucumbers, potatoes, a green pumpkin, onions, a summer squash, and turnips. The chest is made up of an artichoke, cabbages leaves, lettuce leaves, a white daffodil, a white lily, a pink rose, a white rose, a yellow lily, two chilies, and many other flowers. Those are the shapes in the painting. They often overlap each other. The textures are mostly smooth. The shapes and lines used are circles, curve lines, and very few straight lines. The composition of Vertumnus is composed of these shapes, plants, fruits, flowers, lines, and colors. The painting is kept in the Skokloster Castle on lake Malaren between Stockholm and Uppsala.

## “WINTER”



“Winter” is the final picture in the series of the Four Seasons which Arcimboldo painted in 1573.

Winter is depicted as an ancient tree stump, which has almost died, with cracked bark, partly detached from the tree. It is easy to make out a pathetic old man whose nose is peeling and whose toothless mouth - a mushroom - sits on a chin full of warts. His face is covered with a stubby beard and is full of scars and scabs. His eye seems to be hiding in a deep crack in the bark, and what we recognize as an ear is nothing but the remainder of a broken-off

branch. A thick straw mat protects the old man from the cold. However, Arcimboldo does not see winter just as the cold season; his picture also contains an element of comfort. Hanging from a broken branch there are an orange and a lemon: with their bright colours they introduce a glimmer of sunshine and warmth into the cheerless atmosphere. The green ivy growing from the back of the old man's head, as well as the tangle of branches resembling a crown, reinforce the feeling of hope that winter will not last forever. It is the most complex portrait of the entire series, in which we can find elements as "cold" and "dry" as the bark that forms the face, and others so "live" and "warm" as the leaves of the hair and the two fruits hanging on the neck. Perhaps the optimistic Arcimboldo didn't want to depict the winter as a "cold" season, so he added these "kind" elements to the typical cold elements of the winter. The painting is kept in the Museum of Fine Arts, Vienna Austria.

## “AUTUMN”



“AUTUMN” was also painted in 1573. A broken old tub is held together by some wicker branches and a head comes out of it. It is the head of a rather rough sort of fellow, and is made up of autumn products. His bulbous nose is a juicy pear, his healthy-looking cheek is a ripe apple, his chin is a pomegranate and his ear is a large mushroom. It seems appropriate that the earring should be an over-ripe, burst fig. His head is crowned with red and white grapes, reddish vine-leaves and a gigantic squash, thus reminding us of Arcimboldo's earlier depictions

of Bacchus. The sumptuousness of the fruit is an indication of the fertility of autumn, and the sharp tongue which comes through the prickly lips seems to signal autumn's joyful anticipation of culinary delights. “AUTUMN” is a curious summary of fallen leaves, fruits and mushrooms. The painting is kept in the Louvre Museum, Paris France.

## “SUMMER”



“SUMMER” was part of a series that depicted the Four Seasons, which was a popular theme that Arcimboldo turned to several times during his career, his first set dating from 1562. The painting, which measures 30x25 inches (76x63.5cm) depicts the head of a person \_not clear whether it is a man or a woman\_ seen in right profile. Every part of the head is a fruit or vegetable, and it is quite a challenge to identify what all of them might be. Clearly they would have been in season

in that part of Europe at the time when the painting was made. There are apples, pears and cherries there, plus at least one potato, a courgette (for the nose), grapes, garlic and a pod of peas. Ears of wheat appear to be growing out of the collar of the tunic, which bears the artist's name, and on the shoulder the date 1573 is clearly visible. The painting is kept in the Museum of Fine Arts, Vienna Austria.

## “SPRING”



“Spring” is completely framed by garlands which were painted in a style distinctly different from that of the figure. The human portrait was composed of only various spring flowers and plants. From the hat to the neck, every part of the portrait, even the lips and nose, was composed of flowers, while the body was composed of plants. When we look at the painting from a distance, we notice that the face is that of a young woman with a gentle smile. A close look however reveals that her skin, hair and clothes are only an illusion and that the woman is in

fact composed of the petals and stalks of spring flowers, which are rendered in minute detail. Her skin consists of blossoms ranging from white to pink, her hair is made up of a magnificent array of colourful flowers and her dress is a collection of green plants. Her nose is a bud of lily, her ear a tulip, and her eye is a couple of black nightshades and their blossom. White flowers are arranged to form a ruff, which separates face from dress. The painting is kept in the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, Madrid Spain.