



Bernardo Strozzi, *Eratosthenes Teaching in Alexandria*, ca. 1635, oil on canvas, 78.9 x 99.4 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Bernardo Strozzi (1581–1644) was a renowned Italian Baroque artist who painted both religious and secular images. At the age of seventeen he joined a Capuchin monastery, but left after ten years to care for and financially support his ill mother and unmarried sister. While Strozzi’s past as a monk is evident in his religious works, this secular painting centres on the dissemination of scientific teachings during a time of great discovery in the ancient Greek empire. Eratosthenes (ca. 276–ca. 194 BCE), the mentor in this image, is known as the “father of geography” on account of his role in establishing the field. Beside him is his apprentice, eager to learn about this burgeoning science as he clutches a globe to the right. Given that Strozzi evaded orders to return to the monastery after his mother’s death and the marriage of his sister, this painting may signify the artist’s opposition to the Catholic Church’s suppression of scientific knowledge in his day.

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