Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Head of a Neapolitan Girl*, 1881, oil on canvas, 35.6 x 30.8 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Between 1881 and 1882, Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919) travelled to Italy in order to study Roman frescoes and the work of the Renaissance masters. It was during this trip that he produced this portrait of a young Neapolitan girl. Renoir began his career as a porcelain painter, which is often reflected in his manner of depicting his subjects. The porcelain-like skin tone, simple hairstyle and clothing and downward gaze of this figure contribute to the artist's depiction of her as a shy and innocent country girl. For Renoir, subject and effect were inseparable notions when

it came to art. He strongly believed that painting should give pleasure, and therefore only painted pleasing subjects.

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