

Changing Attributions

While a few artists and craftspeople achieve lasting fame during their lifetimes, many—if not most—eventually fall into obscurity. As generations pass, artists' identities may become confused, their works may be ascribed to others, their subjects forgotten. The academic discipline of art history, which developed in the 18th and 19th centuries in tandem with the opening of public art museums, constantly makes new information available. Research conducted by art historians and museum curators involves primary source documents, recent discoveries, and even scientific analysis. Many artists and works of art in the Louvre's collection have been rediscovered through these means. In many cases, rediscovery has taken the form of reattribution—the reassigning of a work's authorship to a different artist. Several works of art on view in this gallery are more accurately understood today because of the solid documentation that underlies their reattribution.