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PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA: PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS

What a shame that the Met has shunted four glorious paintings by the monarch of the early Renaissance into a gloomy interior gallery, hanging the works asymmetrically and letting the texts overpower the pictures. Luckily, Piero is tough enough to handle the sloppy display, and the quartet of devotional images, the largest just two feet tall, exhibit a reticence and severity that make them look more modern than most of what's in Chelsea. His "Saint Jerome and a Suppliant," from the 1460s, captures the saint's asceticism with a harsh palette of beiges and browns; the Senigallia Madonna of 1478, with skintones like ice milk and light streaming harshly through a back window, oscillates between tenderness and austerity, and settles on the latter. Piero isn't a comforting painter, as visitors to the Frick learned last year. But he's an perpetually incisive one, and that may be a greater accomplishment. Through March 30.

January 14 – March 30

Website: <http://www.newyorker.com/arts/events/art/piero-della-francesca-personal-encounters-metropolitan-museum-of-art>