

Interlude - Artistic Revolution #2

The Renaissance - Realism Period

Medieval Art

reminder of the project

I'm testing an idea:

- That it is useful and maybe fun to look at the history of physics in the context of another technique for representing the world.

I've chosen art, painting, in particular

Remember, for my purposes, "represent" implies "insight" - an understanding, which is deeper than just portrayal

- I have many of the characteristics of Kuhnian Scientific Paradigm in mind

In a broad, cultural sense, I think what distinguishes one era from another is

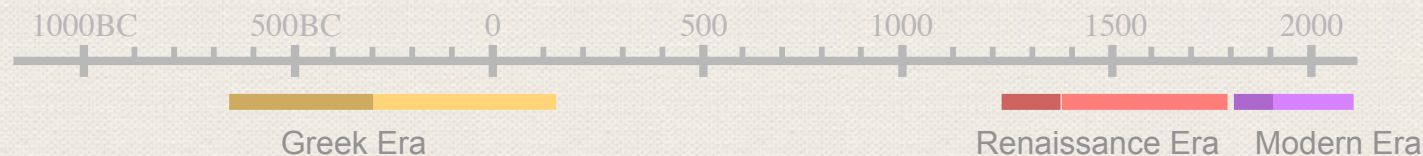
- Members of an era clearly see themselves as different from those of a previous era - a new self-awareness evolves
- Members of an era have a distinct relationship to the physical world - an ability to detect, influence, interact with, and describe the world evolves

- We have already identified one such era - the passage to the Greek period from the Homeric and Presocractic eras

I think that there are 2 more, for a total of 3:

- Greek era
- Renaissance era
- Modern era

These eras do not come about instantaneously, rather they evolve over many years:



distinguishing features 1

Egyptian/Mycenaen/Homeric eras → Presocratic, followed by Classical Greek eras:

- The worldview of the times changed from belief in a world in which natural and human events was capriciously controlled by deities to one in which the natural world was:
 1. thought to be knowable and
 2. possibly constructed from a common, underlying fabric or process.
- Artistic representation comes to be based on both
 1. visual input and
 2. generic, Ideal forms.
- Scientific representation is based on
 1. reconciliation of change with permanence and perfection and
 2. ultimately the expectation that a System can encompass the whole of nature (Aristotle)

distinguishing features 2

Medieval times → Renaissance, followed by Enlightenment eras:

- **The worldview of the times changed from one in which**
 1. the afterlife was the focus;
 2. a static philosophical and religious authority ruled; and
 3. society was largely closed and rural**into one in which**
 1. the individual and accomplishment during one's lifetime mattered;
 2. the natural world came to dominate over philosophical and religious authority; and
 3. international worldliness cross fertilized cultural development.
- **Artistic representation is based on**
 1. visual input, with an emphasis on faithful portrayal of what's passively observed;
 2. an expectation that all observers should have the same perceptual experience;
 3. the importance of subject matter and form; and
 4. importance of portrayal of individual emotion.
- **Scientific representation is based on**
 1. observation and experiment of motion which is visually apparent and immediate;
 2. description in terms of mathematics;
 3. a rigor within the practice of experimentation; and
 4. the placement of the observer as external to experiment and motion is based on a fixed Absolute Space and Time.

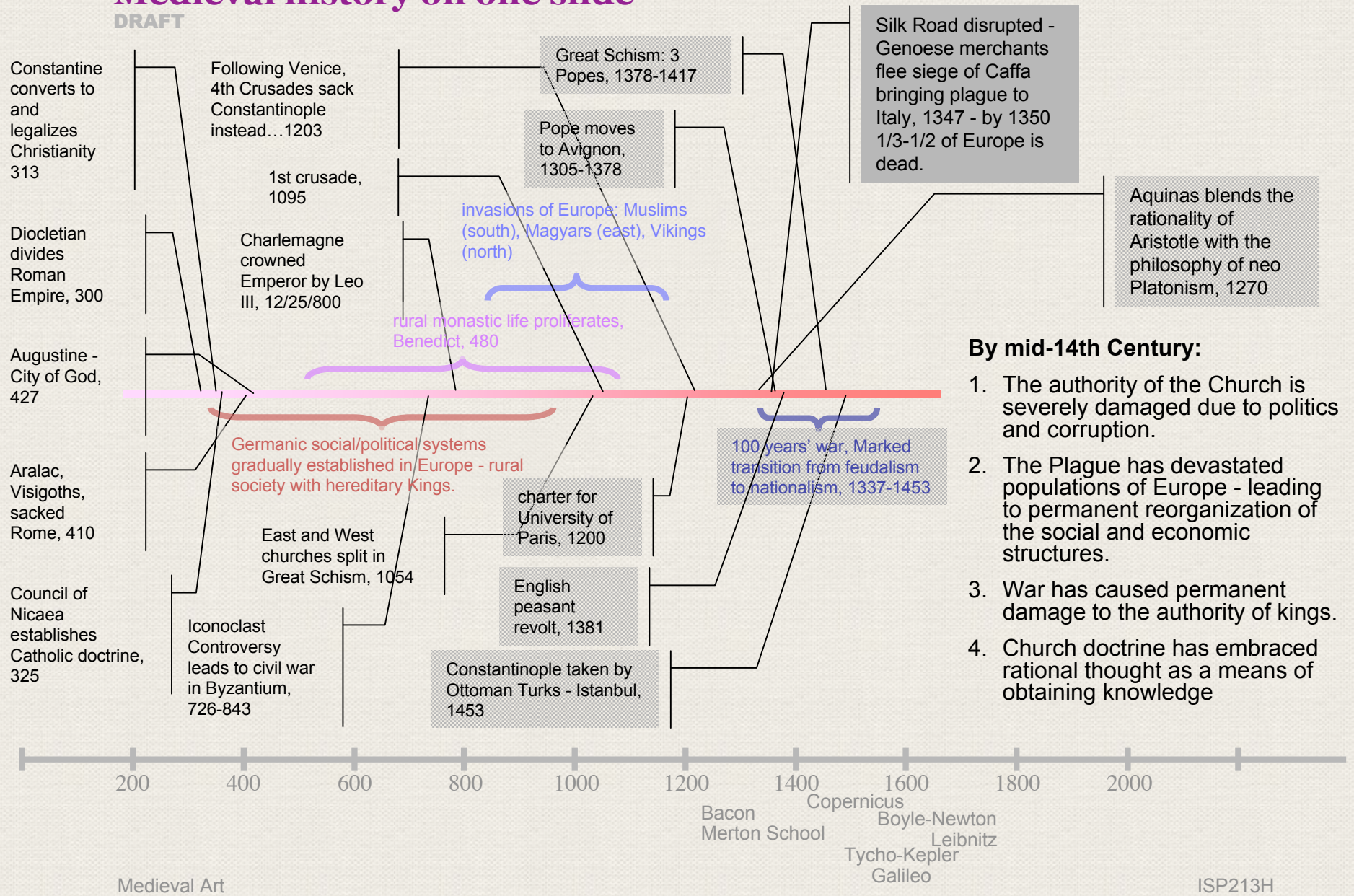
distinguishing features 3

Enlightenment → Modern era:

- **The worldview of the times changed**
 1. from one of optimism about the future bred by revolution and technological/economic advancement (Enlightenment);
 2. to one of insecurity and introspection resulting from world war and economic inequity (Modernity).
- **Artistic representation is based on**
 1. both visual and cognitive contributions;
 2. the realization that Observers and Observed stand in close relationship to one another; and
 3. the growing importance of Form, Color, and Space as important on their own rights.
- **Scientific representation is based on**
 1. non-visual experiences, beneath the surface of the passively observed;
 2. a recognition that the observer and the observed are intermingled; and
 3. realization that a privileged observational position is no longer valid.

Medieval history on one slide

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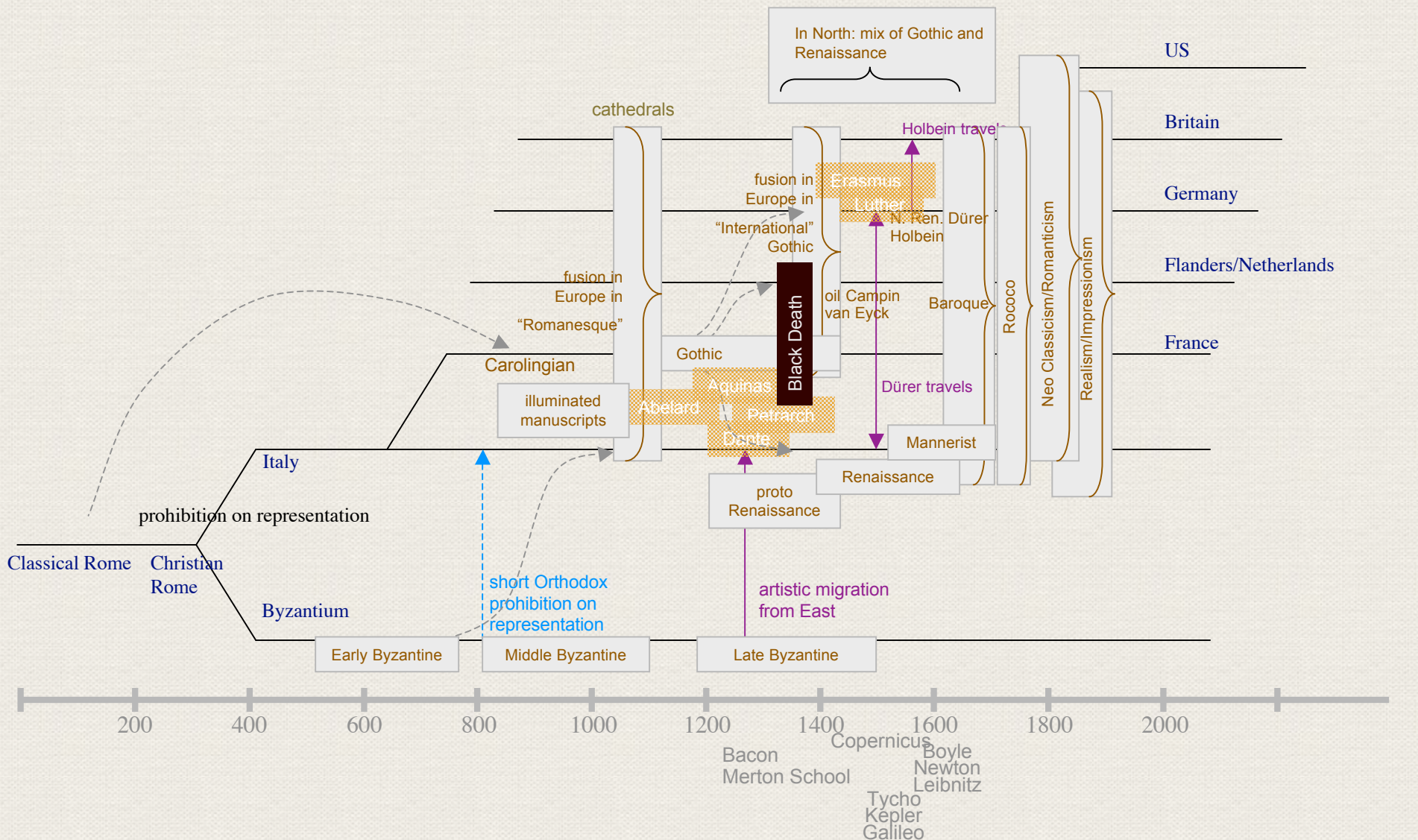
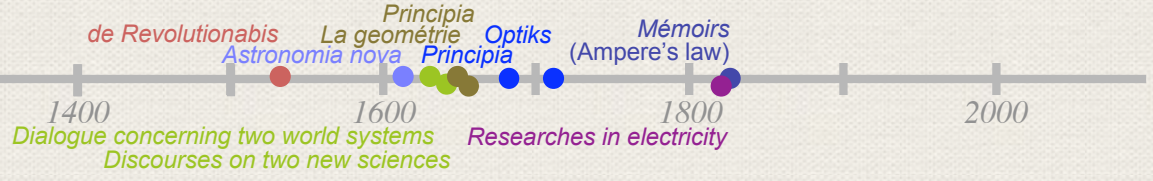


By mid-14th Century:

1. The authority of the Church is severely damaged due to politics and corruption.
2. The Plague has devastated populations of Europe - leading to permanent reorganization of the social and economic structures.
3. War has caused permanent damage to the authority of kings.
4. Church doctrine has embraced rational thought as a means of obtaining knowledge

Very rough sketch of artistic timeline

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Pre-renaissance art

three broad categories:

- church architecture and decoration
both east and west
- book illumination
west
- liturgical images
both east and west
- vernacular images
little, west

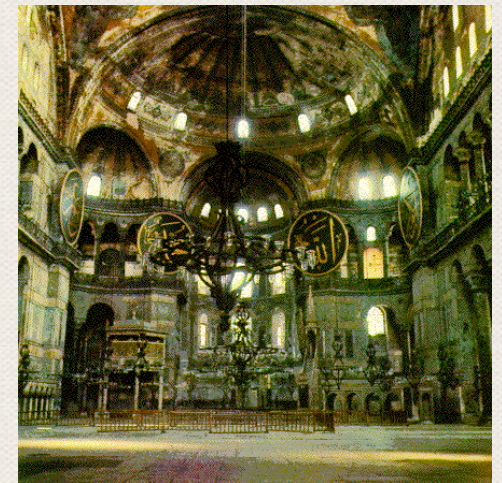
early architecture

two Roman styles were perpetuated

- an old circular, domed, central layout (like the Pantheon)



S. Vitale, Ravenna, ca 526, Justinian

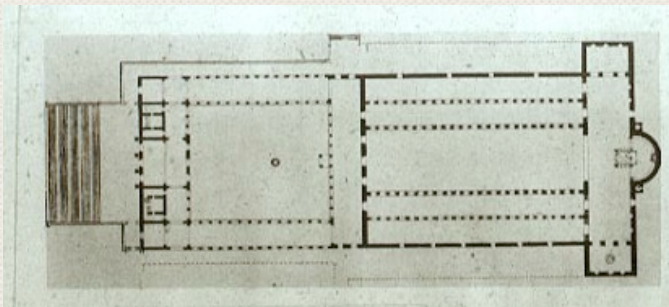


Hagia Sophia, Emperor Justinian, 532

basilica

and the elongated basilica format applied by Constantine

- originally a Roman civic architectural form
- the original St. Peter's (Constantine)
- St. Mark's, Venice

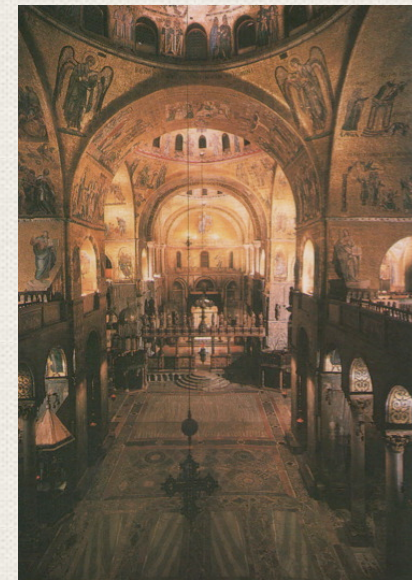


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S. Apollinare, Ravenna, ca 533

St. Mark's, Venice, 1063



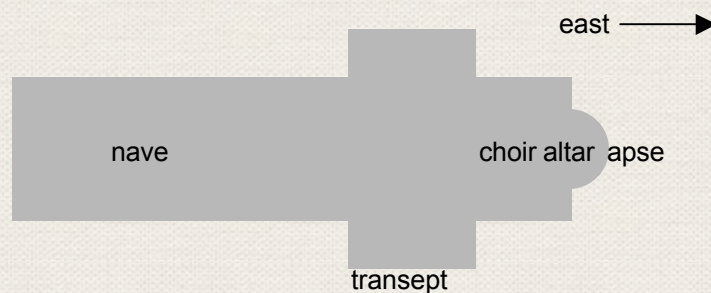
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Romanesque (~1000)

“pilgrimage churches”

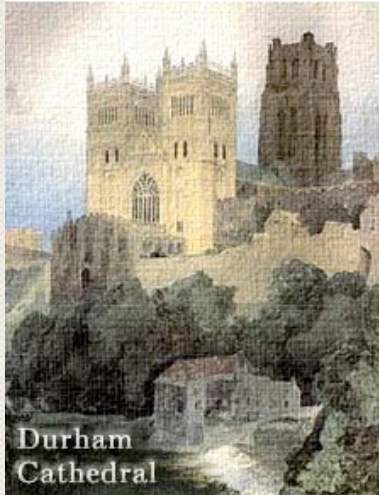
- five during medieval times
 - housed relics which attracted pilgrims along well-known routes
- constructed similarly along the “Latin Cross” plan
 - basilica format
 - huge naves with flanking aisles
- Romanesque
 - barrel vault - reduced the fire hazard associated with wooden roofs, but required thick, solid walls
 - only light from very top

A building boom all over Europe



Saint-Sernin, Toulouse, France, ~1070

Romanesque building was an international affair



Durham, England



Pisa, Italy



Medieval Art

Saint Philibert, France



Speyer, Germany

Gothic (~1140) architecture

A style with a definite beginning

- **Abbot Suger, Benedictine monk and politician, determined to make the Royal Abbey at Saint-Denis (~ca 8th century)**

determined to make Saint-Denis as spectacular as possible

worked out alliance between Louis VI and the Church against the Germans

playing on the historical lineage assumed by French royalty to Charlemagne, he targeted Saint-Denis for attention - Both Pepin and Charlemagne had been consecrated there...

- **He wrote extensively about his reconstruction**

characterized by considerably more light

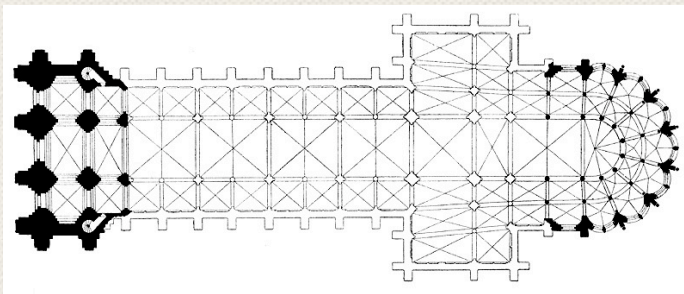
new arch construction with pillars and considerable stained glass (including one of Suger)

moved the heavy load-bearing columns outside

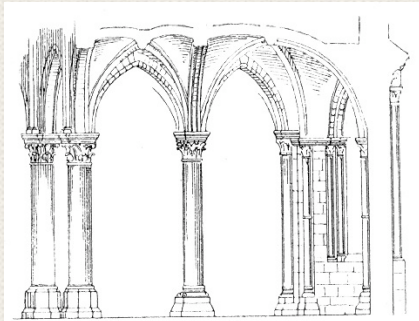
- **This became the Gothic norm:**

buttresses outside, allowing for the actual walls to contain windows...and stained glass

This evolves into the distinctive “flying buttress” design

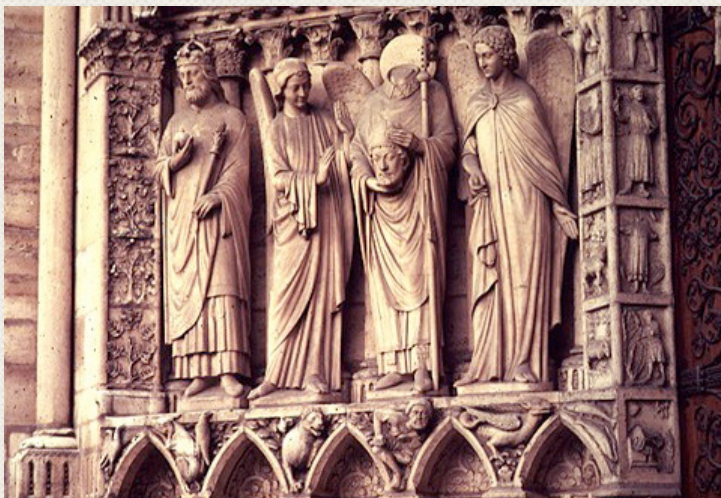


Saint Denis



Saint Denis Abbey, Western façade.
Photo by Jacques Mossot

Notre-Dame, Paris



Gothic construction is the high point, of any era



Chartres Cathedral, 1194

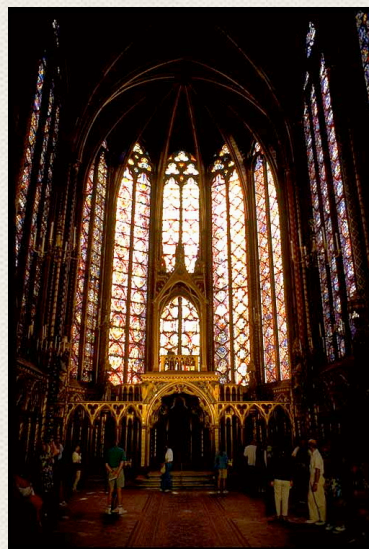


Canterbury Cathedral, ca 1070



Sainte-Chapelle, Paris, 1243

Medieval Art



Milan Cathedral, 1386

monastic heritage

Book illumination

- Codex
 - first adopted in 1st century for most usually theological subjects
- Charlemagne is credited with much critical organization
 - He instituted rules that all churches would contain schools
 - First-hand re-imported Roman art forms into liturgical and lay artistic life
 - Established a compact script for monastic copying: quick, concise, and consistent



fifth century Virgil "Vatican Virgil", a pagan manuscript



Utrecht Bible, ninth century

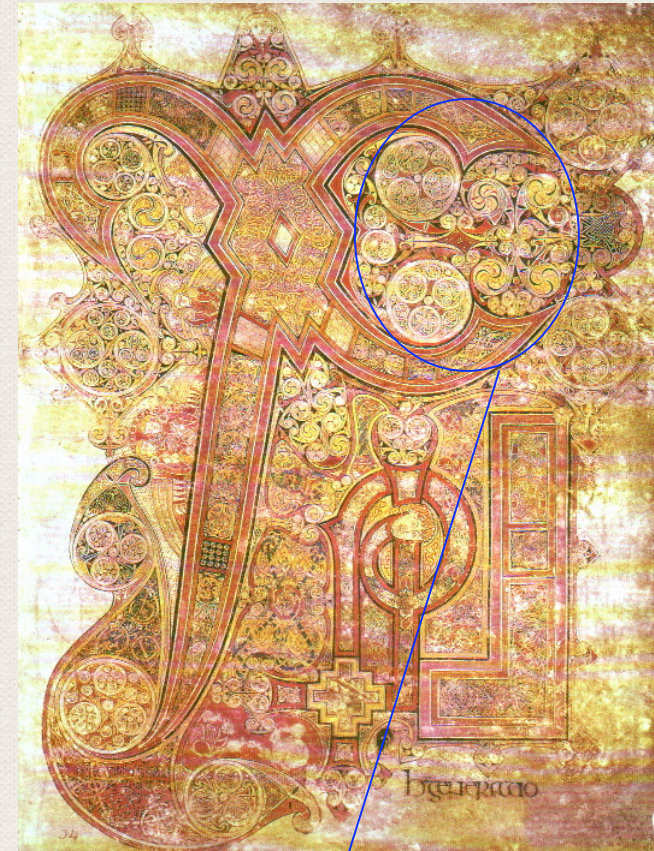


Bible from fifth century Venice

up north...

One of the hotbeds of illustration

- was nearly strictly decorative
but amazing in detail - distinctive lettering
The Celtic Irish monks produced the glorious Book of Kells



renaissance, small “r”

the Carolingian resurrection of Roman style:



Lindisfarne Gospels, eighth century



Carolingian Gospels ninth century



Harley Golden Gospels, ninth century

Notice that the older illustration is abstract - that's no structure that St. John is sitting on
The Carolingian Gospel illustration could have come from a Pompeian wall and the Harley is a fully articulated body...

Romanesque art, ~900-1150

most famous is the Bayeux Tapestry, ~1073-83

- a 230' long story of William the Conqueror's invasion of England



A secular theme, the story is told in detailed figures

each with a personality and with details missing even from the Carolingian figures

Characteristic of the painting and the frescoes of the period

Illustration evolved, but did not make a large leap of style in the Romanesque period.

In this Wedricus Gospel page, the hints of Byzantine influence are apparent.



Saint John the Evangelist, from Gospel Book of Abbot Wedricus, 1147

meanwhile, in the East

While western Christian art transformed the Classical style

- in the east, it remained largely in tact - with the Greek and oriental influences dominating the Roman most evident in mosaic creations, such as in S. Vitale - political statements by a powerful “roman” emperor
- prior to the “Iconoclast” controversy the introduction of the Icon became an object of worship, on par with the relics
 - originally, Christ, the Virgin, and various saints
 - actual “window” to the original portrait of Jesus, done by Luke and portraits of Mary which appeared, presumably by miracle

this heritage presumably fixed the likeness and the style

Icons continue to this day as a part of the liturgy in the Greek Orthodox church



from S. Vitale, Theodora and her court, flanked on an opposite wall of Justinian and his court.

Virgin and Child Enthroned between Saints Theodore and George and Angels, late 6th century - one of the oldest and first icons of Mary



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middle-to-late Byzantine periods

Liturgical purposes dominated

- The icon became a set pattern with rules
size of figures, according to religious hierarchy, always a gold background, poses fixed, Peter: always rounded beard; John the Baptist, scraggly beard; Paul, always bald; Christ, blue and gold before, purple and gold after the resurrection; Virgin, blue and purple; Peter, gold and beige
- after crusades, west and east influence each other



Virgin and Child Enthroned, 843, Hagia Sophia

Medieval Art



Mother of God and Protectress of the Church, Church of Our Lady of the Pharos, Constantinople, 11C

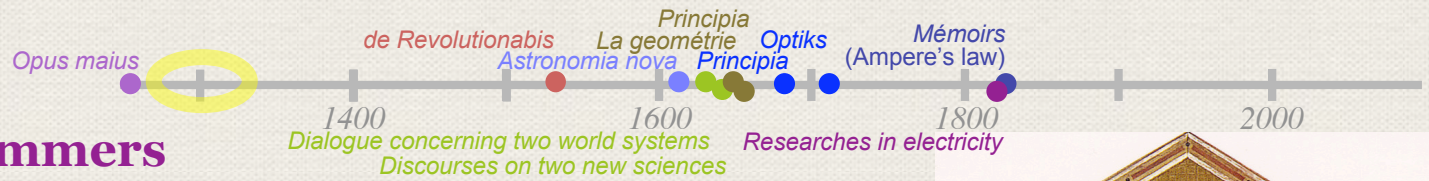


Madonna and Child on a Curved Throne, 1280



Christ as Ruler of the Universe, the Virgin and Child, and saints, 1190, cathedral of Monreale, Sicily

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the first glimmers

Like astronomy, revolution in art...one man: Giotto di Bondone 1268-1336

- originally self-taught
 - a shepherd, discovered by Cimabue sketching sheep on a rock brought to Florence and given an artistic education
- he had predecessors Duccio and Cimabue
 - painters who began to reinterpret the Byzantine style, not quite leaving, but you can see the strain as they try to break out



Maesta di Santa Trinita, Cimabue, 1280



Maesta, Duccio, 1308...the main panel of a large alterpiece



Giotto

rediscovered how to put 3d objects on a 2d surface

- and to endow his subjects with emotion and naturalism not seen for 1000 years



Madonna d'Ognissanti,
Giotto, 1310

The baby looks like a baby, and not a little adult

The faces look more naturalistic

But, the theme is still Byzantine, with character sizes appropriate to their religious ranking

In Faith, however (done earlier), he is clearly showing a new eye for realism

This is almost sculpture-esque...the folds have something realistic to do with the body parts underneath, the shading is highly refined...



Faith, Giotto, 1305

this is a real door, there is depth and space is rendered with a sense of mass and dimension

not only realism sneaking in

...but emotion - tender, as in Anne's love for Joachim - and heart rendering, even for angels

- Also...point of view: notice that backs are turned

Giotto has brought the viewer into the scene, to share the emotion - note that there is a hint of a real, human body under the draped clothing; lighting is not correct, but shadowing is attempted - spheres, cylinders, cut in various positions is a problem that he tackled to improve perspective

These are real spaces, occupied by real people - not the abstract nowhere spaces of earlier scenes

- This extreme feeling had not been shown since, perhaps, Laocoon.

Giotto's fame was widespread - Florence hailed him, as did Rome

- This adulation for a named artist was also new



Giotto, *Meeting at the Golden Gate*, 1304-06, Cappella dell'Arena, Padua

Medieval Art



Giotto, *The Mourning of Christ*, 1305, Cappella dell'Arena, Padua

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The goals have changed

The program is now one of verisimilitude, representation with loyalty to the truth and to the purpose and underlying theme

This is carried out with artists who are firmly working within Giotto's research programme:

- The Lorenzetti brothers (Pietro 1320-48; Ambrogio 1319-48) - took Giotto's reworking of space to new 'heights'
- Simone Martini - who left Italy to work in the Papal court...remember, in France
 - His refined approach was an influence in the development of the International Gothic Style



Ambrogio Lorenzetti,
Allegory of Good Government: Effects of Good Government in the City and the Country, 1338-39



Medieval Art



Martini, *The Angel and the Annunciation*, 1333

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truly international Gothic style

Sometimes, impossible to attribute, difficult to date

- example: the Wilton Diptych (named for the house in which it was found)
English, French, Flemish, or Bohemian?
Richard II & two English saints kneeling before the Madonna and Child - the Three Kings?



The flowers, the ring, the lamb, the gesture of the Child - all symbolic



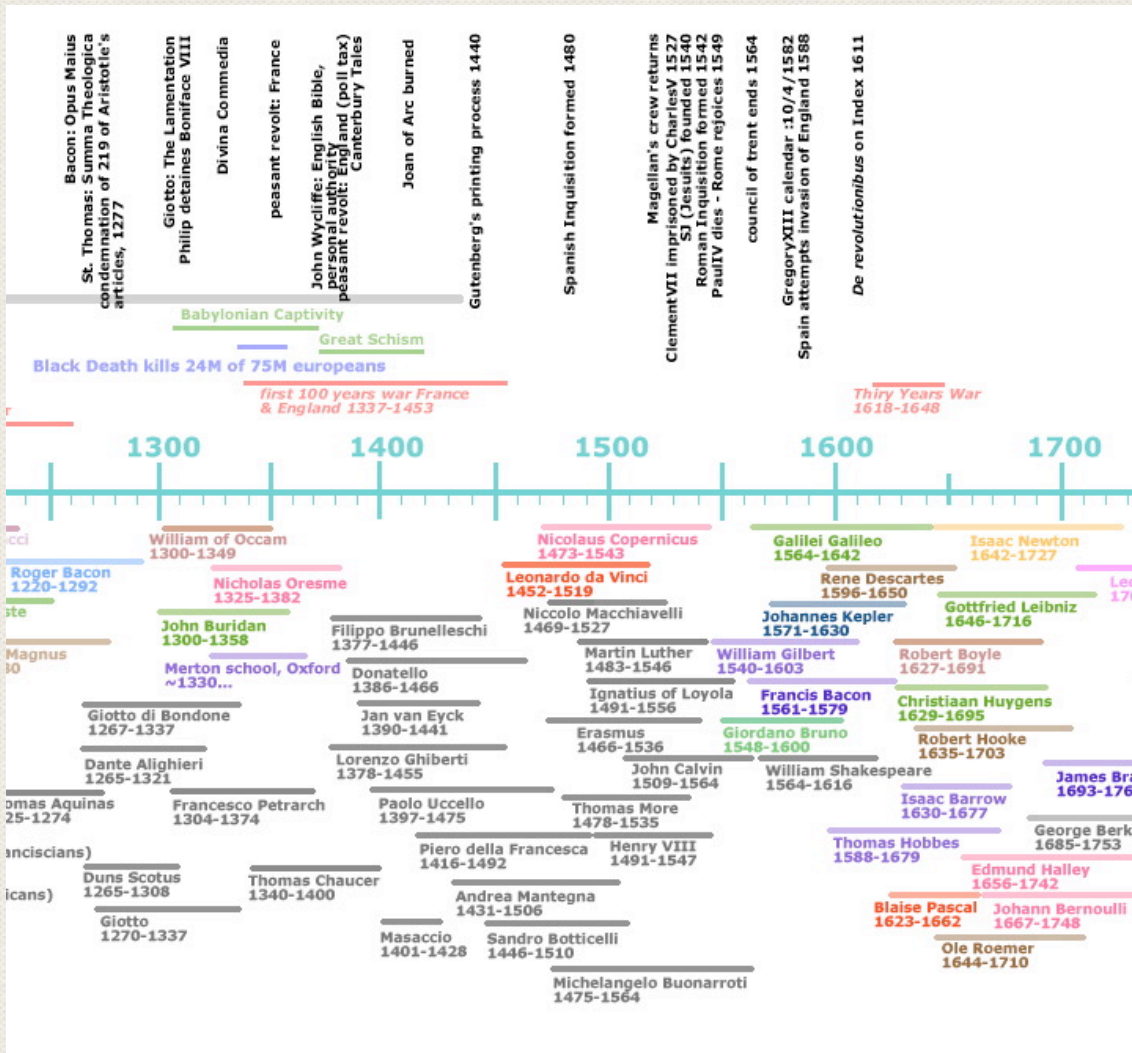
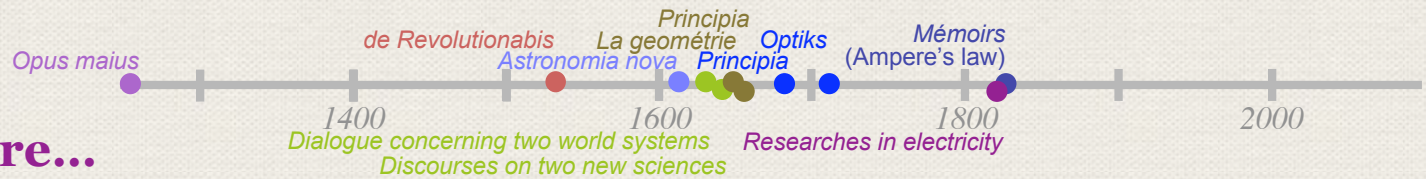
Limbourg Brothers, *July*, from *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, 1413

Important for the everyday settings shown, incorporating people's regular, seasonal activities always interacting with a natural setting.

There is a real castle in almost every month's depiction.

where we are...

The progress...stopped



Notice some things:

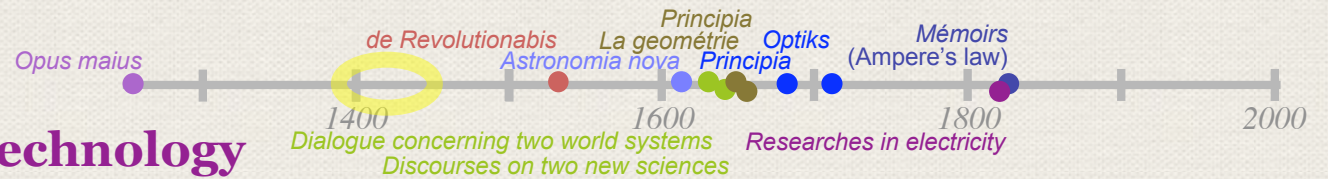
1. The Black Death put nearly a stop on the progress of art - remember the Lorenzetti brothers both dying in 1348?
2. The awakening of representation in the arts coincides with the beginnings of mathematical physics in the Merton School
3. The beginnings of Humanism are right at this point
4. And...the social upheavals begin soon after this.

All of this ushers in the beginnings of the Renaissance - remarkably simultaneously in the North and in Italy.

The Renaissance is usually divided into:

1. Early Renaissance ~1420-1495 (*Last Supper*)
2. High Renaissance ~1495-1520 (Death of Raphael)
3. Mannerist ~1520-1600

perspective and technology



The Northern Renaissance

- not generally considered to be as radically new as Italy's
Humanism was a major underpinning
The north was still in the grip of Gothic architecture and design
- But, artistically, it's innovative and a quantum leap toward representation
Robert Campin (1406-1444) was the father of the Northern (Flanders) artistic revolution
Notice that he's solved the problem of shading that eluded the Italians
Imagine how contemporary *Portrait of a Woman* is with the last gasp of the Gothic!



Robert Campin, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1420-30

Of course, the technology is the invention of oil based painting.

Prior, the emulsion that held the pigments in place was egg whites - *tempra*

The discovery that slow-drying oil could be used revolutionized the practice of painting:

- the slow-drying meant that a painter could change his mind

- the colorings possible were greatly increased, as was the brightness

- shading was more easily simulated

Usually credited to van Eyck, the technology can't be attributed to any one person.

the north meant *detail*

The most was made of the new capabilities

- intricate detail was a part of the Netherlands and Flanders art community



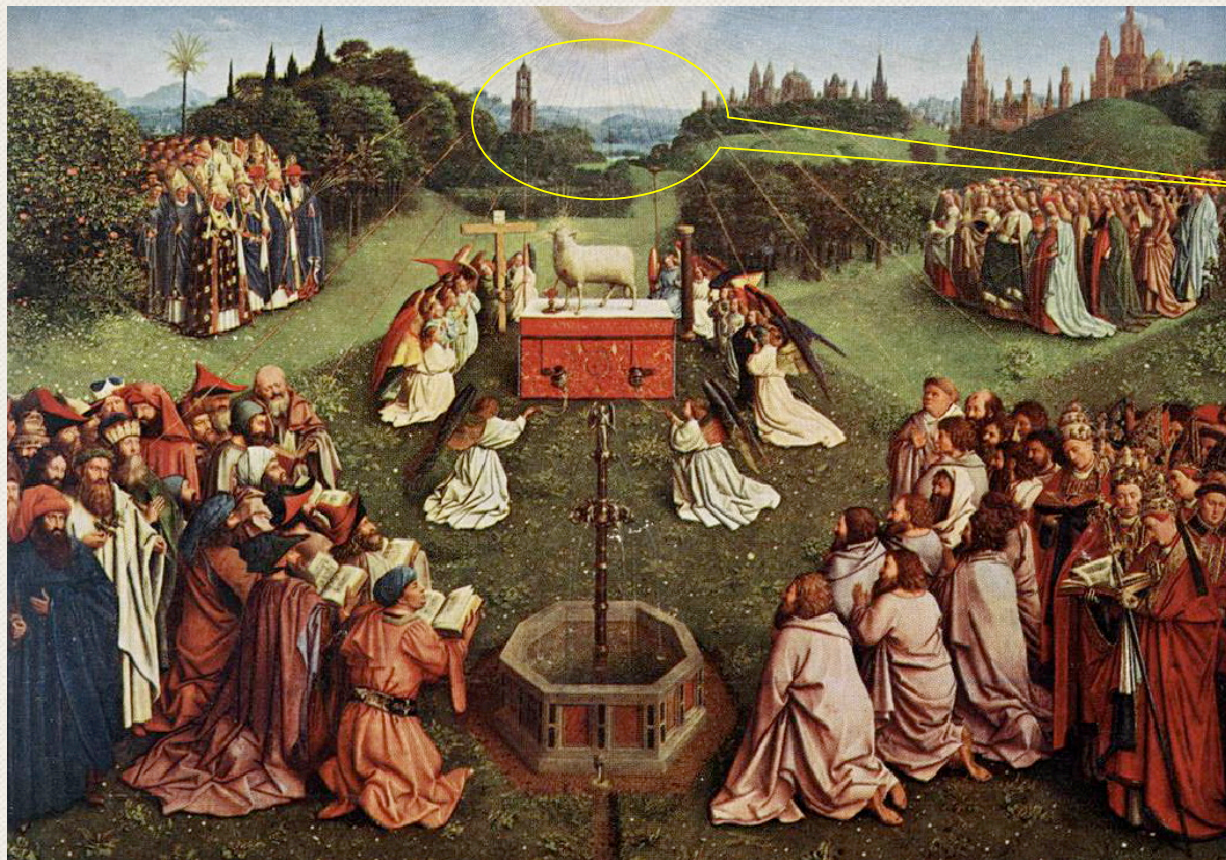
attributed to Campin, *Mérode Altarpiece*, 1425-30

The interior view, with the window to the outside, is to become a Low Countries trademark. Highly symbolic (lilies, mousetrap, etc)

perspective

atmospheric perspective

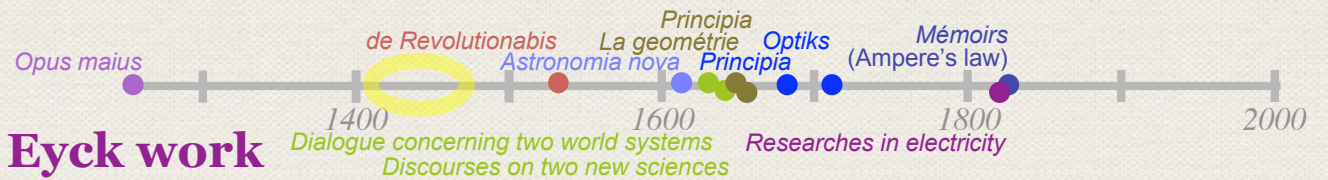
- the first recognition that the atmosphere plays tricks on light of different colors
keeping the foreground bright and the background light, subdued, and indistinct lends a “painterly” technique to bring more of a realistic sense



trees in the distance are a different shade of green...more bluish

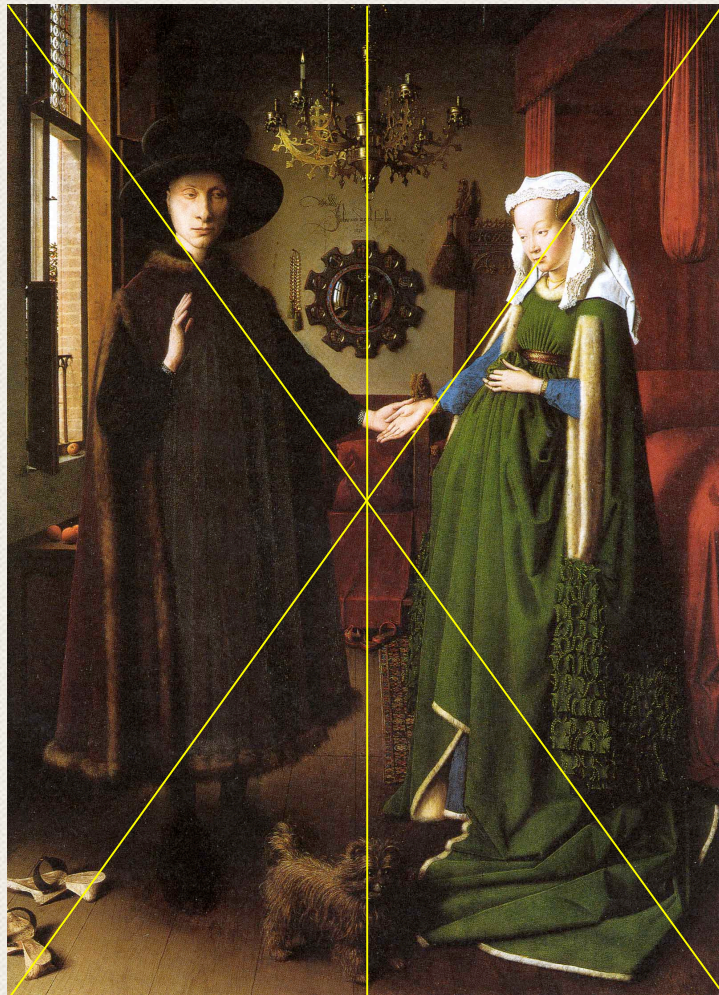
van Eyck, *Adoration of the Lamb*, from the *Ghent Altarpiece*, 1432

Notice the contemporary setting and that spatial perspective is still not correct - but there is depth which is realistic nonetheless



most famous van Eyck work

Is a marriage contract



Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Marriage*, 1434

This painting is almost certainly legalizes a marriage.

It is laid out as precisely as a legal contract (above the mirror, on the wall is the statement: "Jan van Eyck was present". He was a witness to the wedding.

It is full of symbolism and surprises.

The single candle: God's all seeing eye.

The dog precisely between bride and groom: a symbol of faithfulness

The shoeless stance: the ground of holy matrimony

The bedchamber: home and family.

The raised dress: fertility

St. Margaret's image carved in the chairback: patron of women in childbirth.

What's enormously clever, and a portent for art to come:

The [viewer is at this wedding](#)

Attention to the viewer of the work is going to be come a design concern.

the Northern Realism spread

and was refined by students of Campin and van Eyck

- most prominent was van der Weyden



The whole spectrum of grief is represented

It is not attractive, but it's also strangely still Gothic with the posturing and body positions: realistic while at the same time somewhat unreal



you are there



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