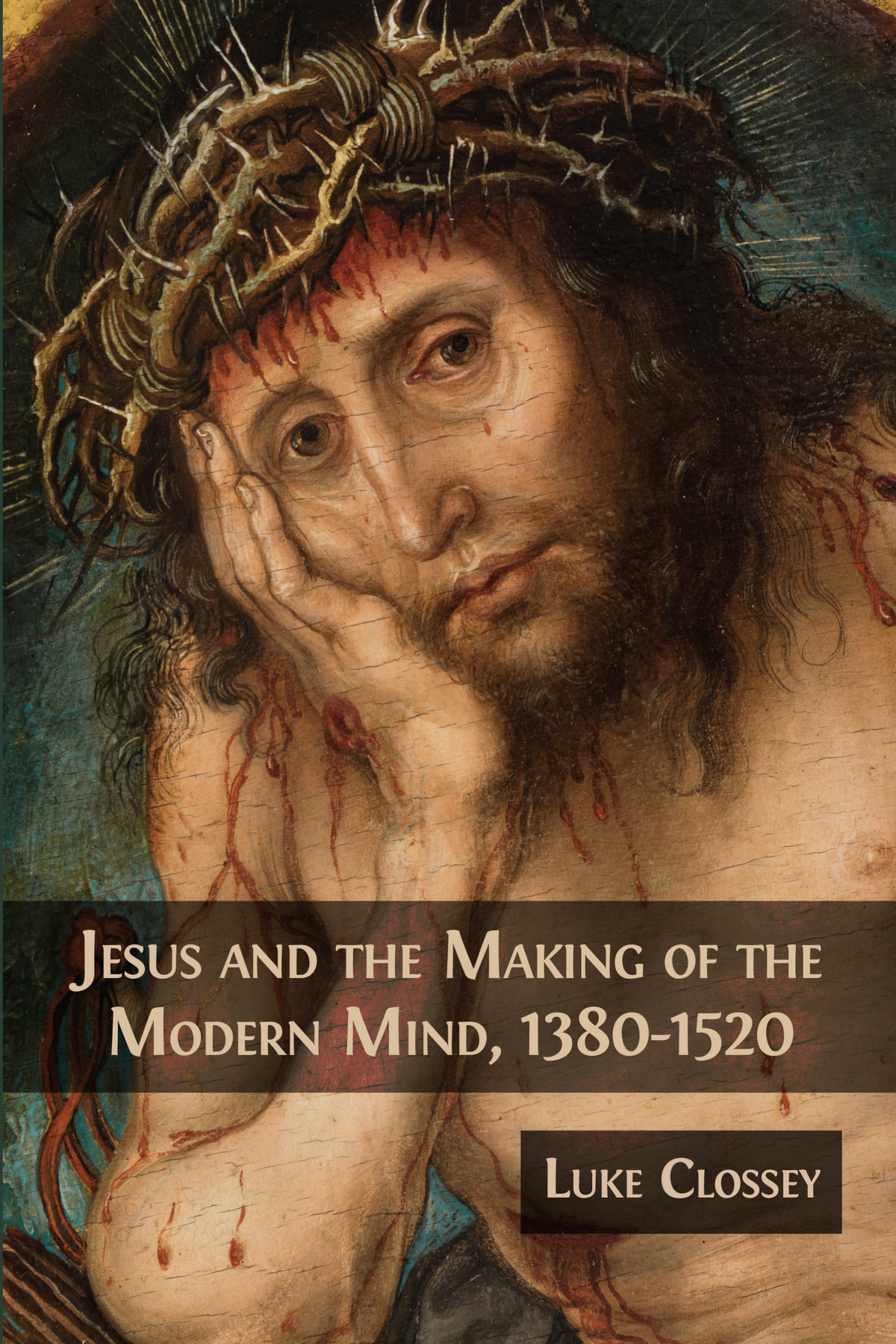

Jesus and the Making of the Modern Mind, 1380-1520

Luke Clossey

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15. Art and the Plain Ken

In Florence, one of the wealthiest cities of the Far West, something strange in the visual arts happened at the beginning of our period. Painters abandoned reality for illusion, and totality for restriction. The Florentines, and then the Far Westerners more generally, took a series of conventions rooted in an instant of time and deemed them normative. They appreciated that the immediately sensible world was experienced first one moment and then the next, and was full of ugly imperfections. They took those limitations and ugliness and celebrated them as art.

Even the illusionism of linear perspective, which was *the* breakthrough in Far-West art, had already happened in China, and been mocked. In the tenth century, Chinese painting achieved a technical and artistic excellence that allowed it to represent accurately the surface of reality.[1] The eleventh-century critic Shen Gua 沈括 condemned the linear perspective of the tenth-century painter Li Cheng 李成: "Should one attach paramount importance to the angles and corners of buildings?" Shen Gua favoured instead the traditional "angle of totality" that expressed more of a subject than its appearance from a limited perspective.[2] Thus, just as these artists achieved this technical illusionism, the art critics urged them forward, beyond mere representation. The most famous critic was Su Shi 蘇軾 (d. 1101):

> If anyone discusses painting in terms of formal likeness [似]
> His understanding is nearly that of a child.

1 James Cahill, *The Compelling Image: Nature and Style in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Painting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982), 27–28.

2 This is an odd phrase in English, perhaps reflecting its ambiguity in Chinese: 以大觀小, literally, "using big to see little." The much more eloquent "the angle of totality to behold the part," Ernst Schwarz's translation, has become standard in English-language scholarship. Recently, Zheng Li has translated it as "Macro Observation into Details" and linked it to Zhuangzi's "macro observation with the perspective of taoism" (以道觀之). 郑笠, "'以大观小'与'以道观之'—论沈括式中国特色透视观与庄子观物态度之关联," 闽江学院学报 (2012) 33: 73-78; Tsung Pai-hwa 宗白華, "Space-Consciousness in Chinese Poetry and Painting" [lecture delivered on 11 March 1949], trans. Ernst Schwarz, *Sino-Austria Cultural Journal* 1 (1949): 25–53.

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0371.15

Continuing, he asked, "If likeness alone can be valued, how much more so truth [眞]?"[3] The clever absurdities that had been explored and, then dismissed, in the Chinese Core became acceptable, and then preferred, in the Periphery.

This narrative is less triumphalist than the traditional view of the Renaissance. Four of the most iconic paintings of all time were made within a thirty-year period around 1500, in a 900-km arc from Rome to Milan: the *Birth of Venus*, the *Creation of Adam*, the *Last Supper*, and the *Mona Lisa*. The Italian Renaissance stands as the turning point in the western art tradition, a breakthrough from the archaic abstraction of medieval icons into the "realism" that makes European art exceptional. In particular, the technique of linear perspective allowed artists to reduce a three-dimensional shape onto a two-dimensional canvas in a "realistic" way.

Instead, looking at Europe as a peripheral Far West gives us a global perspective. Shifting from a forward-looking early-modern framework to a late-traditional view lets us view their values for their own sake and within their own context, rather than solely for how they have led up to the present.

The previous chapter argued for the deep-ken realism of the archaic style. This chapter argues that the apparent realism of the Italian Renaissance is only real when seen with the plain ken. Where the previous chapter made a case for the logic of Jesus images seen with the deep ken, this chapter looks at Jesus images created with a plain-ken viewpoint. These images still impress viewers for their "realism," especially in contrast to the earlier icons. These illusionistic images place their subject in a visual world that resembles our own, and so—neglecting how the depicted deities actually looked—appear less alien to us. In particular, this chapter considers the various techniques artists used to create these more plain-ken images of Jesus. In contrast to deep-ken consonance, these techniques often involved dissonant elements (words spelled backwards, sex workers modelling the Blessed Virgin). In contrast to deep-ken octaves, we see here the cacophony of everyday life.

This transformation happened in several ways, each of which is treated individually in this chapter. The plain ken intimated a limited visual space. Plain-ken images also constricted time into a line, by setting Jesus compositions in the fifteenth century, or, in some cases, the first century. Their artists modelled first-century beings on fifteenth-century humans; they emphasized the creation of their artworks in time by highlighting their status as artworks, whether by quoting other images, or by adding their own marks of individuality. The chapter concludes with the voices alarmed by the drawbacks and consequences of these innovations.

3 "論畫以形似, 見與兒童鄰." Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP, 2012), 32, 188 (her translation).

Space

The most apparent feature of plain-ken art was its new attitude towards space. The fifteenth century saw the emergence of the first maps featuring graphical scales, enabling the precise measurement of distance on the map.[4] The architect Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446) and the sculptor Donatello (ca. 1386–1466) both used graph paper.[5] Painters included conspicuous imperfections to intentionally capture an accidental-looking moment, like a carefully composed "candid shot" on social media today. Natural light replaced light emanating from holy figures.[6] Some works employ multiple plain-ken tactics. We consider each of these facets of plain-ken depiction: linear perspective, awkward stagings, and natural light.

Linear Perspective

The Florentines, independently rediscovering the technique of the medieval Chinese painter Li Cheng, found a plain-ken way to achieve a high degree of illusionism. The great challenge was reducing three-dimensional subjects to two dimensions.[7] One solution (frequently used, for example, for drapery) was to observe a model and reproduce the observation. Another solution (frequently used for representing space) was to observe and, bringing in some helpful mathematics, then use spatial lines.[8]

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4 Peter W. Parshall and Rainer Schoch, ed., *Origins of European Printmaking: Fifteenth-century Woodcuts and Their Public* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 259.

5 Antonio Manetti, "Vita di Filippo di Ser Brunellesco," in *Operette istoriche edite ed inedite*, ed. Gaetano Milanesi (Florence: Successori le Monnier, 1887), 94–95.

6 We might call this "Bukharan" light: according to tradition, while most cities are illuminated by the sun, the holy city of Bukhara is not; it is Bukhara that illuminates the sun. Bukhara emitting light was seen by the Prophet on the mi'raj and by cosmonauts. See Maria Elizabeth Louw, *Everyday Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 65.

7 At times, the artist is reducing a three-dimensional reality to a two-dimensional space curved into three dimensions. For example, Michele Giambono painted scenes (ca. 1432, ca. 1451) from the life of the Virgin on the barrel vault of the Mascoli Chapel, of the Basilica di San Marco, Venice. The result of the curved surfaces is that the architecture (at least in photographs) is morphed in a way usually seen in Orthodox reverse-perspective images. See Michele Giambono, *Birth of the Virgin* (1431–33), Wikimedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Michele_Giambono_-_Birth_of_the_Virgin_-_WGA08946.jpg and Michele Giambono, *The Visitation* (ca. 1451), Wikimedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Michele_Giambono_-_The_Visitation_-_WGA08947.jpg .

8 Fernando António Baptista Pereira, "Da narrativa na arte: *espaço-tempo figurativo* e *istoria* na pintura pós-medieval," *Cartema* 3 (2014): 277–301, https://doi.org/10.51359/2763-8693.2014.251739

As we have seen, there had long been a visual theory of perspective. Early-fourteenth-century artists frequently organized space in illusionistic ways. Already Duccio's (ca. 1255/60–1318/19) *Last Supper* (ca. 1311) has a fishbone perspective in which the orthogonals converge to a single *line* (rather than a convergent *point*), like the fish's ribs converging onto its spine (see Fig. 15.1). The representation of Florence at the base of the mid-fourteenth-century fresco *Madonna della Misericordia* in the Loggia del Bigallo shows light and shadow from a single instant of time.[9] In the *Institution of the Crib at Greccio* (1295), Giotto situates the viewer in the worst possible position with respect to a crucifix—behind it. We no longer see a crucifix as such, but we see merely a single view of the crucifix, a view ill-chosen with respect to the majesty of the crucifix, but one well-chosen if his goal was to locate the viewer precisely in a space.[10]

A new era in representation began in front of the Florence Baptistery around 1420, when Brunelleschi made a panel painting employing the first "true" perspective: orthogonals all converge at a single point, based on observation, with an axis perpendicular to the panel extending from the depicted building to the eye of the beholder. The proof, too, was found by observation, through the comparison of the viewed reality and a mirror reflection of the panel painting.

In the Far West around 1420 this painterly technique became fully wedded to the visual theory of perspective. Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72) added a layer of theory to Brunelleschi's experimentation to form the first definition and construction of perspective painting.[11] How does this work?

Alberti effectively constructed a three-dimensional grid. Stand at the back of an imaginary church, facing the altar, and note the lines running in three dimensions, the vertical pillars, the transversal pews, and the orthogonal aisles. All other lines in the church will be some combination of these. In Alberti's system, the vertical remained vertical on the picture plane, the transversal lines horizontal—but spaced with increasing density to suggest increasing distance—and the orthogonals converged at a single point, thus unifying spaces into a

9 *Madonna della Misericordia*, Loggia del Bigallo, Florence, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Madonna_bigallo,_firenze_view.jpg

10 Giotto, *Institution of the Crib at Greccio*, Basilica of San Francesco d'Assisi, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giotto_-_Legend_of_St_Francis_-_-13-_-_Institution_of_the_Crib_at_Greccio.jpg. Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 143; Samuel Edgerton, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 15; David Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 148; Erwin Panofsky, *Die Perspektive als "Symbolische Form"* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1927), 38.

11 Edgerton, *Renaissance*, 40.

single space. This point Alberti called the "centre point," but it has become better know in English as the "principal vanishing point."[12]

Fig. 15.1 Duccio, *Last Supper* (ca. 1311), Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena, Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Duccio_di_Buoninsegna_029.jpg

Mathematics is rhetorically powerful, but it can be useful to question the apparent objective reality of perspective. In nature, distant things appear to be smaller than near things, but not all cultures operate in worlds where this equation is relevant: in the twentieth century, an Mbuti man leaving the dense

12 Brook Taylor, *Linear Perspective: Or, a New Method of Representing Justly All Manner of Objects as They Appear to the Eye in All Situations* (London: Knaplock, 1719). Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. Rocco Sinisgalli (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2011), 39–42, https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511782190, is somewhat in tension with this. See Edgerton, *Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective*, 26, 43.

rainforest for the first time saw tiny buffalo insects, in disagreement with his anthropologist, who thought they were normal-sized buffalo at a distance.[13]

Indeed, linear perspective comes with, and creates with, a number of non-obvious assumptions about space and about time. Linear perspective assumes that physical space is continuous, infinite, three-dimensional, homogenous, isotropic, quantifiable, and seen by a central (physically and psycho-spiritually) individual. There, those objects and spaces depicted have orientations, have insides and fronts, and have outsides and backs. Linear perspective assumes time can be frozen, that all the actors and props depicted, as well as the imagined viewer, can freeze at one moment. Given these assumptions, the illusionism of linear perspective impressively matches reality only if you stand at a distance, without moving, with one eye closed.[14]

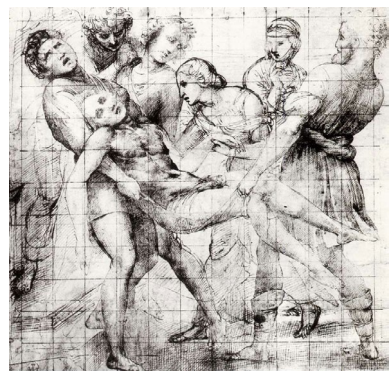

Fig. 15.2 Raphael, Study for the *Deposition of Christ* (1505), Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raffaello,_studio_per_la_pala_baglioni_03.jpg

Many theorists, from Alberti on, made a greater claim, that linear perspective mirrored a deeper reality, capturing the truth of the soteriological world: a mathematically ordered creation, through which grace radiated like light, where viewers were educated in salvific processes through images that clearly reflected these realities. Alberti claims that painting "has been enormously useful to religious sentiment [...] and to preserve minds with a certain intact devotion." The images thus become representations of the better-than-worldly, and we can model our society based on these images; thus, society becomes

13 Colin M. Turnbull, "Some Observations regarding the Experiences and Behavior of the BaMbuti Pygmies," *The American Journal of Psychology* 74 (1961): 304–08 (305).

14 Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988), 33; Leonard Goldstein, *Social and Cultural Roots of Linear Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: MEP, 1988), 20.

an image created to mirror these paintings.[15] Thus, the plain ken could reclaim deep-ken advantage through the triumph of geometric harmony.

The most interesting uses of the new plain-ken space come with Jacopo Bellini (ca. 1400–70), but in his sketches rather than his paintings.[16] Less dependent on patrons' demands and less expensive to work out, drawings were a place of experimentation. They were often used in-house, as stock patterns and models. Most drawings were overused, worn out, and lost to us, but Bellini's unusual experiments were valued by his contemporaries, and thus many survive, especially in the Paris (ca. 1430s–50s) and London (ca. 1450s–60s) albums.[17] Typically, his drawings have a spatial complexity that transcended the apparent unity of spacetime. Rather than a single vanishing point, his lines converge into a vague vanishing zone. Ancient architecture stands besides exemplars from the Venice of his own time, all edited by Bellini into new arrangements. In his *Baptism*, the landscape takes on a spatial complexity that resembles and replaces architecture, which perhaps has symbolic resonance: a classical pillar lies broken in the foreground, defeated by the new dispensation inaugurated by the Baptism.[18] In many drawings, the architecture totally dominates, dwarfing the apparently inconsequential religious figures and action.[19] In others, the landscape dominates, to similar effect.[20] One Crucifixion could have been much more focused on Jesus, who is actually in the foreground, but the artist has "stepped back" to better include the large crowds in the "shot." Art historian Alexander Nagel describes this feeling well, in reference to the Crucifixion in Bellini's *Road to Calvary* (ca. 1430s–50s): "in the moment it occurred, for the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of Roman-dominated Jerusalem, it was simply another execution."[21] This image also positions the crosses at

15 Alberti, *On Painting*, 45. See Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), 85; Edgerton, *Renaissance*, 30–31.

16 Colin Eisler, *The Genius of Jacopo Bellini* (New York: H. N. Abrams 1989); Christiane L. Joost-Gaugier, "Jacopo Bellini's Interest in Perspective and Its Iconographical Significance," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 38 (1975): 1–28.

17 His son Gentile probably donated (in 1470–80) the Paris album to the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II. Bernhard Degenhart and Annegrit Schmitt, *Jacopo Bellini: The Louvre Album of Drawings*, trans. Frank Mecklenburg (New York: George Braziller, 1984), 1–13.

18 Jacopo Bellini, *Baptism of Christ*, Louvre, Paris, https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl020113170

19 For example, the versions of Jacopo Bellini, *Flagellation*, Louvre, Paris, https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl020111973, https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl020113155, https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl020113148.

20 For example, Jacopo Bellini, *Christ Nailed to the Cross* (ca. 1430s–50s), Louvre, Paris, https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl020113146

21 Alexander Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 148.

awkward, oblique angles.[22] The stables of Bellini's nativities are shown, perhaps unfinished, without walls, to better appreciate the space and perspective; in one instance, the stable is, like the cross, arranged obliquely.[23] The stables' instability reminds us of the fleeting plain-ken moment the images capture.

Similarly inventive are the preparatory drawings made by Raphael (1483–1520). Consider the drawings planning out the composition of his *Deposition* (ca. 1507).[24] One drawing, following an idea of Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), finds depth by going beneath the skin, but only to represent the plain-ken subject more persuasively.[25] The figures are effectively see-through, like Bellini's Nativity stables. Another drawing uses a grid, which facilitates the transfer of the images to the larger painting, a process requiring an over-ten-times increase in scale (see Fig. 15.2).

Fig. 15.3 *Jesus and His Disciples Being Met by Two Men Who Ask for Forgiveness*, from the *Kulliyat* of Sa'di (1527), Walters Art Museum, MS W.617, CC0 1.0, https://art.thewalters.org/detail/81172/jesus-and-his-disciples-are-met-by-two-men-who-ask-for-forgiveness/

We find a more complex depiction, drawing on plain-ken and deep-ken senses of space, from the Islamic world. A 1527 Shirazi illustration of the *Kulliyat*

22 Jacopo Bellini, *Road to Calvary* (ca. 1430s–50s), Louvre, Paris, https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl020113146

23 For example, the versions of Jacopo Bellini, *Adoration of the Magi*, Louvre, Paris, https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl020113182, https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl020113181, https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl020113180

24 Francis Ames-Lewis, *The Draftsman Raphael* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1986), 51–53.

25 Raphael, Study for the *Deposition of Christ* (1498–1520), British Museum, London, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1895-0915-617

[Complete Works] of Sa'di (d. 1292) depicts *Jesus and His Disciples Being Met by Two Men Who Ask for Forgiveness* (see Fig. 15.3). In this image, larger size corresponds not only to proximity to the viewer (plain ken) but also to absolute importance (deep ken). Jesus, in addition to the obvious halo, wears a more complex costume and the whitest and longest beard. The leftmost disciples, in maroon and yellow, are 90% of Jesus's height. The third disciple, in green, is 0.93 Jesus-heights, and the last disciple 0.87. These would be consistent with the disciples farther away from the viewer than Jesus—except that the orange petitioner (if he stood up) is also 0.90 Jesus-heights. It might be that 90% of a Jesus height is the standard depicted height for non-Jesus people, and the artist added +/-3% to give a plain-ken sense of relative distance.

The stigmatization of Francis of Assisi (d. 1226) creates particular problems in plain-ken space. Francis faces a crucified six-winged angel. In normal space, it is not possible for an observer to be positioned in a way that allows frontal view of two figures directly facing each other. A further complication arises in that lines typically connect each of the angel's wounds to each of Francis's. This creates a geometrical complexity, which can either be messy, or ignore the rules of plain-ken spacetime. Examples abound,[26] but we might look particularly at Giorgio da Saronno's sixteenth-century fresco which heightens the geometrical complexity by placing the stigmata lines above a tile floor that creates its own two-dimensional grid.[27]

Painters made complex choices about whether and how to use the techniques of linear perspective. One Madonna and Child includes a prayer, not depicted as a deep-ken speech-scroll, but rather carved in a location that is plausible to the plain ken—underneath a crossbeam. The geometry of linear perspective gives it a place both convenient and prominent, but the words themselves are not foreshortened—legibility trumped illusion. In the distance, God the Father can also be seen, in a small size reflecting the triumph of the rules of linear perspective over the deep-ken correspondence between importance and size.[28]

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26 *Stigmatization of St. Francis* (ca. 1440), Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Details/Index/959675 and "Caspar," *Stigmatization of St. Francis* (ca. 1475), woodcut, BSB Rar. 327-1/4, https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/view/bsb00079851?page=20,21. See David S. Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe* (Farnham: Asghate, 2010), 34–42, with reproductions at plate 3 and ill. 4.

27 Giorgio da Saronno, *St. Francis and St. Roch* (1522), Oratorio di San Salvatore, Casorezzo, https://veronicaroute.com/1522/11/23/1522-3/

28 *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* (ca. 1520), Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest, https://www.mfab.hu/artworks/33092/. See Emöke Nagy, "Urban Patronage of Saint Anne Altars in Late Medieval Hungary," *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 22 (2016): 161–62.

Awkward Stagings

Plain-ken artists created a worldly dissonance by intentionally adding imperfections into their works. A straight-on angle is in some sense the "best"—or most perfect and deep-ken—form of representation, as it maximizes the visible surface of the object or person. In contrast, plain-ken painters used foreshortening to create an illusion of accidental glance, rather than capturing the subject at the "best" angle, or during a particularly dramatic moment. Foreshortening tends towards the plain ken: it is not the ideal front-on view, but rather suggests an awkward angle, as if the viewer happens to be looking, in time, while en route to a more central vantage point. Crucifixion images, for example, sometimes included a backwards "SPQR" flag (see Fig. 15.4), as if the painter "took a picture" at the wrong time, before the wind had a chance to blow the flag into a legible direction.[29]

Fig. 15.4 Raphael, *Christ Falling on the Way to Calvary* (ca. 1515), Museo del Prado, Madrid, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Christ_Falling_on_the_Way_to_Calvary_-_Raphael.jpg

29 See also Piero della Francesca, *Crucifixion* (ca. 1450–60s), Frick Collection, New York, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Piero,_crocifissione.jpg and *Crucifixion* (fifteenth century), Royal Collections Trust, https://www.rct.uk/collection/403495/the-crucifixion

Foreshortening can be used to emphasize the humanity and frailty of Jesus, as in Hans Baldung's (1484/85–1545) woodcut of the *Lamentation* (see Fig. 15.5). Andrea Mantegna's (ca. 1431–1506) *Lamentation* (ca. 1490) in Milan's Pinacoteca di Brera chooses a low angle to emphasize the anatomy, here the wounded anatomy, of Jesus.[30] In Mantegna's *Lamentation*, greater centrality and presence is given to Jesus's crotch and to his throat. Indeed, the concept of an Adam's apple, then current in Italian as "pomo d'Adamo,"[31] might link this throaty Jesus to Adam, his fore-figurer. The perspective here is imperfectly illusionistic: Jesus's feet are too small to be correct, but conveniently this means they do not get in the way, and they do not seem indecorously big.[32]

Fig. 15.5 Hans Baldung, *Lamentation* (ca. 1510), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, public domain, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/336239

30 Andrea Mantegna, *Lamentation* (ca. 1480s?), Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_dead_Christ_and_three_mourners,_by_Andrea_Mantegna.jpg

31 John Florio, *A Worlde of Wordes*, ed. Hermann W. Haller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 497.

32 Dawson Carr, *Andrea Mantegna: Adoration of the Magi* (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1997), 47.

Many paintings from this period have these apparently awkward stagings. Fra Angelico's (ca. 1395–1455) bloodshot *Suffering Jesus* (see Fig. 15.6) has a doubly awkwardly placed halo: some of the writing is obscured by Jesus's head, and the top of the painting crops off the upper portion of the halo.[33] A distinctively Portuguese posing of the *Ecce Homo* (see Fig. 15.7) is striking for letting the hood cover Jesus's eyes, to be poked through by the crown of thorns. The hidden eyes suggest a later revelation, and the less-than-ideal view of Jesus's face suggests a plain-ken realism.[34] One of the panels of Michael Pacher's (ca. 1435–98) altarpiece centres on the hindquarters of a man collecting a stone to throw at Jesus, himself turned away from the action on the left edge (Jn 8:59).[35] In some depictions of Christ in Limbo, Jesus himself has turned his back to the viewer, so as to better peer into the depths of hell. In Benvenuto di Giovanni's (ca. 1436–1518) version, the devil is smashed like Wile E. Coyote, flat on his back, essentially the position Jesus would be in if he fell back ninety degrees, a move suggested by the fallen gate of hell (see Fig. 15.8).[36]

Jesus is hard to find in some images. A set of seven panels shows, from left to right, acts of giving food, giving drink, giving clothes, burying the dead, giving shelter, visiting the sick, and visiting the imprisoned. Jesus loiters, inconspicuously, a nondescript bystander in a plain-ken world of many nondescript bystanders, in five of the seven panels. The exceptions are the fourth—Jesus in heavenly glory oversees the burial of the dead —and the seventh—visiting prison, Jesus holds a globus cruciger in his left hand while blessing the prisoners with his right.[37]

33 The crown's "barbs entered his venerable head so forcibly that his eyes became filled with flowing blood, his ears were blocked and both his face and beard seemed covered and saturated with his rose-red blood." Saint Birgitta, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, trans. Denis Searby, ed. Bridget Morris, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006–15), III, 235 (book 7, chapter 15). See Laurence Kanter and Pia Palladino, *Fra Angelico* (New York: Metropolitan Museum, 2005), 172–75.

34 Versions exist in the Museu Rainha Dona Leonor (Beja), Museu de Setúbal, Museo Diocesano de Palencia, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, and the Igreja de Santa Cruz (Coimbra).

35 Michael Pacher, *Pacher-Altar* (detail) (1470s), parish church, St. Wolfgang im Salzkammergut, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:St._Wolfgang_kath._Pfarrkirche_Pacher-Altar_Sonntagsseite_01.jpg

36 Andrea Mantegna, *Christ in Limbo* (ca. 1465), Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, https://id.smb.museum/object/735030/christus-in-der-vorh%C3%B6lle; Benvenuto di Giovanni, *Christ in Limbo* (ca. 1491), National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.41669.html

37 Master of Alkmaar, *Seven Works of Mercy* (1504), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/SK-A-2815. See C. J. de Bruyn Kops, "De Zeven Werken van Barmhartigheid van de Meester van Alkmaar gerestaureerd," *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 23 (1975): 203–26.

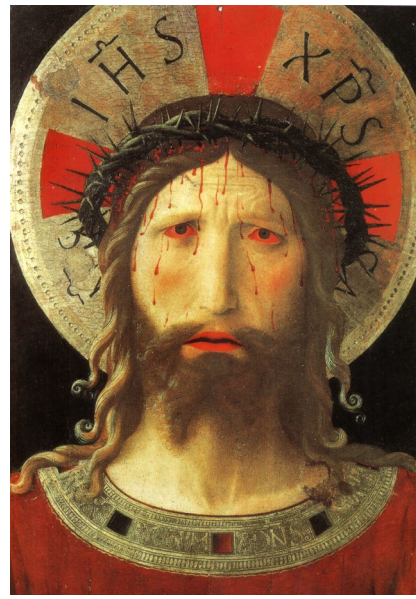

Fig. 15.6 Fra Angelico, *Suffering Christ* (ca. 1420–50), Santa Maria Del Soccorso, Livorno, Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Beato_angelico,_Cristo_coronato_di_spine,_livorno,_1420_circa.jpg

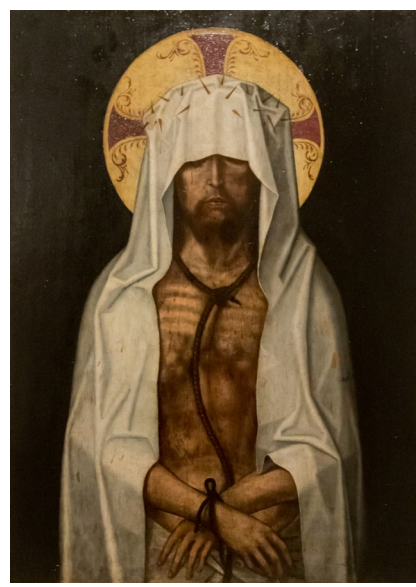

Fig. 15.7 *Ecce Homo* (sixteenth-century copy of an original from the fifteenth century), Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lisboa-Museu_Nacional_de_Arte_Antiga-Ecce_Homo-20140917.jpg

Fig. 15.8 Benvenuto di Giovanni, *Christ in Limbo* (ca. 1491), National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, public domain, https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.41669.html

Albrecht Dürer's (1471–1528) 1510 print of the Ascension focuses on Jesus's followers on the ground. Most of Jesus is out of frame, with only his feet still visible at the top. That adverb "still" expresses the viewer's sense of an earlier moment where his knees could be seen too—the composition captures a moment of time with an easily imagined before.[38]

Sandro Botticelli (ca. 1445–1510) did not quite centre his ca. 1505 *Man of Sorrows*. In fact, Jesus's left eye is centred horizontally, which may contribute to the intensity of the gaze. His upper torso angles to the left, and his head takes up an additional slant in the same direction, so that a line that vertically bisects his face runs at a roughly four-degree divergence from the line that vertically bisects the picture space. The awkwardness suggests a plain-ken sense of space; perhaps Jesus was caught in motion, not quite settled into a symmetrical balance. Jesus's hair gets in the way of not only the angels that make up his halo, but also of the text around the neck of his gown, although enough is visible to be legible with extrapolation: [*Chr*]*isto Iesu Nazareno R*[*egi Iudeorum*].[39] Similarly, the Wurzach

38 The wood block is at the British Museum, London, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1839-0608-3-50. Prints include British Museum, London, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_E-3-71 and https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1895-0122-539

39 Botticelli, *Man of Sorrows* (ca. 1500), private collection, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Botticelli_-_Man_of_Sorrows.jpg. Nagel reads the text in the ablative case; I propose a dative alternative, that this robe was made *for* Jesus, which lacks the subtle theology of the ablative, but fits the argument of a special purpose-made robe. See Alexander Nagel, "Christ in the Ablative: Botticelli's 'Man of Sorrows','" *Sotheby's* (21 December 21, 2021), https://www.sothebys.com/en/articles/christ-in-the-ablative-botticellis-man-of-sorrows

Altar (1437) includes an image in which the weight of the cross pushes Jesus off centre, although he lifts his head to recover a more formal composition.[40]

Giovanni Bellini's (ca. 1430–1516) *Blood of the Redeemer* (1460s) sees Jesus's bloody hand blocking the relief sculpture on the parapet wall behind him. The sculpture represents a pagan sacrifice, with an inscription reading, *DIS MANIB*[*VS*] *AVRELIUS*, meaning "to the spirits of the departed, Aurelius," a common funerary inscription. Aurelius was a common name, perhaps an anachronistic reference to Emperor Marcus Aurelius, or perhaps to Marcus Aurelius Cotta Maximus Messalinus, an infamous senator around the time of Jesus's death. However, Jesus's hand blocks the visual focal point of the funerary ritual. This plain-ken awkwardness, however, has a deep-ken meaning: Jesus's own sacrifice has superimposed itself on previous pagan rites, rendering them irrelevant and, here, invisible.[41]

Fig. 15.9 Master of the Bartholomew Altar (workshop), *Descent from the Cross* (ca. 1495–1510), Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection, 1917, public domain, https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/102556

40 Hans Multscher workshop, *Jesus Carrying of the Cross*, Wurzach Altar (1437), Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, https://recherche.smb.museum/detail/871660/die-kreuztragung-christi

41 Giovanni Bellini, *Blood of the Redeemer* (1460s), National Gallery, London, https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/giovanni-bellini-the-blood-of-the-redeemer. See Gabriele Finaldi, *The Image of Christ* (London: National Gallery, 2000), 182–83 (no. 71).

The *titulus* text that hung on the cross is frequently blocked in plain-ken art. The workshop of the Master of the Bartholomew Altar included the *titulus* (see Chapter 8) in its portrayals of the Descent from the Cross. Typically, these placed the ladder carelessly blocking the text, as in the Philadelphia exemplar (see Fig. 15.9). Another version, in Cologne, has the *titulus* not as a walnut panel, but as a piece of paper, curling on its right side to obscure the text missing in the actual relic itself.[42] In contrast, Michelangelo (1475–1564) had been dissecting bodies, according to Giorgio Vasari (1511–74), in the Santo Spirito hospital, and made for the hospital a crucifix (ca. 1493) as a thank-you. He restored the inscription to its imagined original state.[43]

Natural Light

Natural light was a plain-ken technique recognized at the time. Bartolomeo Facio (d. 1459) describes a painted ray of light "which you would take to be real sunlight."[44] Oil paintings, with multiple layers of paint, with multiple sizes of brushes, allowed for a precise depiction of light. Even supernatural light, as from the Baby Jesus, is depicted as akin to natural light. What is especially new here, in plain-ken art, is not the fact of light, nor that it is natural or supernatural. The innovation, in a spacetime where light can be blocked, is shadow.[45] Piero della Francesca (d. 1492) set his *Dream of Constantine* (1447–66) at night, and the angel is a source of light, casting shadows.[46]

42 Master of the Bartholomew Altar (workshop), *Descent from the Cross* (ca. 1492–95), Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne, https://www.wallraf.museum/en/collections/middle-ages/masterpieces/master-of-the-st-bartholomew-altarpiece-altarpiece-of-the-holy-cross-c-1490-1995/the-highlight/. See Rainer Budde and Roland Krischel, ed., *Genie ohne Namen: Der Meister des Bartholomäus-Altars* (Cologne: DuMont, 2001), 408–413, cat. 78–80.

43 Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991), 422. See Margrit Lisner, "The Crucifix from Santo Spirito and the Crucifixes of Taddeo Curradi," *The Burlington Magazine* 122 (1980): 812–19; Richard Viladesau, *The Triumph of the Cross* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 58–59, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195335668.001.0001

44 Michael Baxandall, "Bartholomaeus Facius on Painting: A Fifteenth-Century Manuscript of the *De Viris Illustribus*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27 (1964): 90–107 (102). This is the same Jan van Eyck portrait described as lacking only a voice.

45 Victor I. Stoichita, *Short History of the Shadow* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

46 Piero della Francesca, *Constantine's Dream* (ca. 1466), San Francesco, Arezzo, reproduced at *Archive* (2023), https://www.artchive.com/artwork/constantines-dream-piero-della-francesca-c-1466/

The effect is most striking in Nativities. Bridget of Sweden (ca. 1303–73) reported that in her visions Jesus was himself the source of intense light.[47] This inspired Nativity paintings where Jesus was the principal light source, sometimes also with luminescent angels appearing to shepherds in the background. Gentile da Fabriano's (ca. 1370–1427) *Nativity* (1423) shows a glowing Baby Jesus illuminating an intensely dark night scene.[48] Another example is a Dutch *Virgin and Child* where multiple sources of light, including the sun itself, create dramatic and complex shadows.[49] Hugo van der Goes (ca. 1440–82) did his own shadow-rich *Nativity*, now lost, that proved influential, as in versions from Michael Sittow's workshop (ca. 1510s).[50] More famous today is the ca. 1490 panel of Geertgen tot Sint Jans (ca. 1465–95). The austerity of the darkness, which may appeal to our modern eye, is in fact partly a modern alteration: the panel was burnt by a fire in 1904.[51] French miniaturist Jean Bourdichon (1457/59–1521) created some particularly evocative night images. His *Nativity* has three light sources: the star, a lantern, and Jesus himself.[52] In his 1520 *Nativity*, Baldung made the Baby Jesus the main interior source of light, creating ghostly shadows (see Fig. 15.10).[53] Baldung's composition is also illusionistic in that the focus is on a support pillar rather than on Jesus, splitting the space in half, with the animals commanding equal space as the Holy Family—but the eye is drawn to the latter precisely because of the light from Jesus.

47 *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, trans. Searby, ed. Morris, III, 251.

48 Gentile da Fabriano, *Nativity* (1423), Uffizi Gallery, Florence, https://www.wga.hu/html_m/g/gentile/adormagi/adormago.html

49 Workshop of Robert Campin (Jacques Daret?), *Virgin and Child* (before 1432), National Gallery, London, https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/workshop-of-robert-campin-jacques-daret-the-virgin-and-child-in-an-interior

50 Workshop of Michael Sittow, *Nativity* (ca. 1510s), Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Copies are in Barcelona and Saxony.

51 Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *The Nativity at Night* (ca. 1490), National Gallery, London, http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/geertgen-tot-sint-jans-the-nativity-at-night

52 Jean Bourdichon, *Kiss of Judas*, Paris, Musée Marmottan, MS 152, fol. 51v, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jean_Bourdichon_-_Adoration_of_the_Magi_-_WGA02939.jpg

53 Baldung Green, *Nativity* (1520), Alte Pinakothek, Munich, https://www.sammlung.pinakothek.de/en/artwork/ma4dqanxrO/hans-baldung-gen-grien/die-geburt-christi

Fig. 15.10 Hans Baldung, *Nativity* (1520), Alte Pinakothek, Munich, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://www.sammlung.pinakothek.de/en/artwork/ma4dqanxrO/hans-baldung-gen-grien/die-geburt-christi

Fig. 15.11 Bosch workshop, *Arrest of Christ* (ca. 1515), San Diego Museum of Art, Wikimedia, CC0 1.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Arrest_of_Christ,_by_the_workshop_of_Hieronymus_Bosch,_c._1515,_oil_on_panel_-_San_Diego_Museum_of_Art_-_DSC06632.JPG

Even Jesus paintings without him as a glowing baby used plain-ken, natural light. In his *Saint Columba Altarpiece* (ca. 1455), Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400–64) partially hides the star of the Nativity, letting its light shine on an incidental wall. These plain-ken flaws went too far for imitators, who in their own versions prominently displayed the full star (and removed the crucifix, for good measure).[54] Jan van Eyck's (d. 1441) *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin* (ca. 1435) has panels of glass roundels in the background wall to allow the illusion of more natural light to enter the room.[55] One ca. 1515 *Arrest of Christ* from the Hieronymous Bosch (ca. 1450–1516) workshop (see Fig. 15.11) loses Jesus's face amidst those of his tormentors; it stands out only by being less enshadowed than theirs. Most dramatically, halo and star merge into a fireball backlighting Jesus in Matthias Grünewald's (ca. 1470–1528) *Resurrection*, from the Isenheim Altarpiece (1512–16).[56] These paintings foreshadowed the luminance of the later Baroque period, which statistically developed a strong preference for the dark and the black, and for contrasts between light and dark.[57]

Time

Anachronism

The modern art theorist Pavel Florensky (1882–1937) talked about icons, deep-ken images, as a "testimony of eternity."[58] In contrast, everything in plain-ken art must be seen happening at the same time. To the plain ken, a ticking clock

54 Rogier van der Weyden, *Adoration of the Magi* (ca. 1455), Alte Pinakothek, Munich, https://www.sammlung.pinakothek.de/en/artwork/jWLpO7nxKY. See Alfred Acres, "The Columba Altarpiece and the Time of the World," *Art Bulletin* 80 (1998): 422–51.

55 Jan van Eyck, *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin* (ca. 1435), Louvre, Paris, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:La_Vierge_du_chancelier_Rolin_-_Jan_van_Eyck_-_Musée_du_Louvre_Peintures_INV_1271.jpg

56 Matthias Grünewald, *Resurrection* (1512–16), Unterlinden Museum, Colmar, Wikimedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isenheim_Altarpiece#/media/File:Grunewald_-_christ.jpg

57 Daniel Kim, Seung-Woo Son, and Hawoong Jeong, "Large-Scale Quantitative Analysis of Painting Arts," *Scientific Reports* 4 (2014): n.p., https://doi.org/10.1038/srep07370; Krassimira Ivanova, Peter Stanchev, Koen Vanhoof, Milena Dobreva, "APICAS-Content-Based Image Retrieval in Art Image Collections Utilizing Colour Semantics," in *Access to Digital Cultural Heritage*, ed. Krassimira Ivanova, Milena Dobreva, Peter Stanchev, George Totkov (Plovdiv: Plovdiv UP, 2008), 153–202 (193).

58 Павел Флоренский, "Иконостас" *Богословские труды* 9 (1972): 80–148 (111). See Oleg Tarasov, *How Divine Images Became Art: Essays on the Rediscovery, Study, and Collecting of Medieval Icons in the Belle Époque* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2024), https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0378

enters the picture frame, and freezes. Forcing the image to take place at a single time creates a new problem and opportunity—which time to choose? Some artists blended the time of Jesus with their own, into a single hybrid moment (anachronism). Other artists, fewer, began to attempt to depict only the time of Jesus, and used details to show this was a temporal, first-century event, not a deep-ken eternal truth (historicism). To our modern eyes, the first-and-fifteenth-centuries juxtaposition can blend well, but we might contrive to experience a contemporary viewer's anachronistic shock by looking at a Jesus set in a century closer to our own, like Jean Béraud's (1849–1935) *Magdalene* (see Fig. 15.12).

Fig. 15.12 Jean Béraud, *St. Mary Magdalene in the House of Simon the Pharisee* (1891), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jean_Beraud_Simon_the_Pharisee.jpg

Contemporaries were aware of these issues. Leonardo da Vinci thought that using ancient garb for contemporary subjects would allow a painting to age gracefully, without the jarring fashion choices of the time at which the painting was executed.[59] The sculptor Antonio Filarete (ca 1400–69) fought against anachronism from the opposite direction. He used the obvious inappropriateness of depicting "Caesar or Hannibal [...] in the clothes that we wear today" to persuade painters that "when you make a figure of a man who has lived in our own times, he should not be dressed in the antique fashion but as he was."[60]

59 *Leonardo on Painting*, ed. Martin Kemp, trans. Martin Kemp and Margaret Walker (New Haven, CT: Yale UP 1989), 152.

60 Filarete, *Treatise on Architecture*, trans. John R. Spencer, 2 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1965), I, 306.

Many pre-moderns were unperturbed by our sensitivity to anachronism. Christ was crucified in first-century Palestine, and this is a true fact. It is true today in Vancouver that Christ was crucified in first-century Palestine; it was true in seventeenth-century Amsterdam that Christ was crucified in first-century Palestine. This is a true fact at all times and all places, so we can paint it anywhere and anytime. We might think of apparently misplaced (or mis-timed) crucifixions as being crucifixes. We would not object to a crucifix in a sixteenth-century church on the grounds that Christ was not crucified in the sixteenth century.[61]

Settings

A number of compositions locate first-century scenes in obviously contemporary settings. Albert van Ouwater's (d. 1475) *Raising of Lazarus* (1445) takes place in a contemporary church.[62] In the middle panel of Rogier van der Weyden's *Seven Sacraments* (1440s), the Crucifixion is set in a church with the Eucharist being performed at the altar in the background.[63] Justus van Gent (ca. 1410–80) painted an *Institution of the Eucharist* (ca. 1473) where the Last Supper is located in front of a table set as if for Catholic mass—it is in fact a Catholic altar, in a Latin church. Looming in the background are Federico da Montefeltro (with a red hat), his new son Guidobaldo being held behind him, and Caterino Zeno, who had been Venice's ambassador to the court the Aq Qoyunlu sultan.[64] One fifteenth-century manuscript from Tigray shows a number of images of Jesus's Passion (crowning with thorns, arrest, flagellation), probably inspired by Western art, but with Ethiopian adaptations: the crowning soldiers, in profile (which had negative connotations), have flattop haircuts, confirmed by contemporaries as a current style.[65] The length of the thorns may reflect the long acacia thorns of Ethiopia.[66]

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61 For broader discussions of anachronism, see Thomas M. Greene, *The Vulnerable Text: Essays in Renaissance Literature* (New York: Columbia UP, 1986), 218–35; Zachary Sayre Schiffman, *The Birth of the Past* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 2011), 145–49.

62 Albert van Ouwater, *Raising of Lazarus* (ca. 1455), Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Wikimedia, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ouwater,_Aelbert_van_-_The_Raising_of_Lazarus_-_c._1445.jpg

63 Rogier van der Weyden, *The Seven Sacraments* (1440s), Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen, https://kmska.be/en/masterpiece/christ-cross-and-eucharist

64 Justus van Gent, *Institution of the Eucharist* (ca. 1473), Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giusto_di_gand,_comunione_degli_apostoli,_1473-1474.jpg

65 Alessandro Zorzi, *Ethiopian Itineraries*, ed. O. G. S. Crawford (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 170.

66 Stanisław Chojnacki, *The "Kweráta re'esu": Its Iconography and Significance* (Napoli: Istituto orientale di Napoli, 1985), 7–12 (figs. 1–3).

Fig. 15.13 Gabriel Mälesskircher, *Maria Magdalena Washing Jesus's Feet* (ca. 1476), Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0, https://objektkatalog.gnm.de/wisski/navigate/4438/view

Some plain-ken settings were domestic. One painting from Bavaria (1470s) shows Mary Magdalene anointing Christ's feet (Lk 7) (see Fig. 15.13). Its setting is unflinchingly contemporary. Jesus is feasting on pheasant. Kitchenware decorates the room, not the manuscript. A peasant-feather fly-whisk flabellum, which might be used in a mass, here has no religious context, despite being part of a religious image. Some depictions of Madonna and Child use a container of milk as a symbol, one that also makes plain-ken sense to have near a potentially thirsty infant (see Fig. 15.14).[67] In addition to being sweet and nourishing, milk was a symbol of sweetness and nourishment.[68]

67 Similar works are in the Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Strasbourg, and the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.

68 Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Age* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 110–69.

Fig. 15.14 Gerard David, *Madonna and Child with the Milk Soup* (ca. 1513), Musei di Strada Nuova, Genoa, Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gerard_David_-_Madonna_and_Child_with_the_Milk_Soup_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

In some such domestic spaces, time expresses itself in explicit or complex ways. Gabriel Mälesskircher (ca. 1425/30–95) placed the four evangelists in an explicitly contemporary domestic space adorned with tokens of popular devotion. Luke's cow and Mark's lion sit at their humans' feet like house-pets. Matthew's writing desk has the date (1478) next to a Veronica image (see Chapter 16), and Mark has hung an astrological chart—also dated 1478—on the wall, and affixed an IHS to his desk (see Fig. 15.15). In an extreme example, the Master of Flémalle's *Annunciation* (ca. 1415–25) has a print of St. Christopher with the Christ Child over the fireplace (see Fig. 15.16). Here, time eats its own tail: Annunciation precedes birth, which precedes Christopher carrying Jesus, which precedes the creation of the image, which was pinned up before the Annunciation. Deep-ken symbolism and plain-ken domestic anachronism could coexist and even reinforce each other.

Fig. 15.15 Gabriel Mälesskircher, *St. Mark the Evangelist* (1478) (detail), Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid, https://www.museothyssen.org/en/collection/artists/malesskircher-gabriel/saint-mark-evangelist

Fig. 15.16 Master of Flémalle, *Annunciation* (ca. 1415–25), Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels, Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Robert_Campin_-_Annunciation_-_WGA14402.jpg

In the late fifteenth century, landscape backgrounds became more common in paintings.[69] Between *via cruces* and *sacra montes*, the Church made active use of landscape as something worshippers would move through, to recreate and participate in the life of Jesus. Painters could atopistically[70] (analogous to "anachronistically") locate key scenes from the Gospel in settings known to them. They rarely sought to create a first-century Near West scene distinct from the world around them. Rather, narrative scenes unfolded before undisguised backgrounds that were obviously, conspicuously fifteenth-century Europe. The Sant'Anastasia Church in Verona has a fresco by Francesco Benaglio (ca. 1432–92) with Jesus preaching before a seascape teaming with modern vessels.[71] Observers could recognize the Casentino hills, east of Florence, behind Christ and the tall tree in Piero della Francesca's *Baptism of Christ* (ca. 1448–50, discussed below). Konrad Witz (d. 1445/46) located his *Draft of Fishes* (1444) on the shores of Lake Geneva; the glaciers of Mount Blanc loom in the distance to the right (see Fig. 15.17). Pietro Perugino's (d. 1523) *Baptism of Christ* (ca. 1482) shows Rome, identified by its Colosseum and Pantheon, in the background.[72] One Flemish painting of the wedding at Cana (see Fig. 15.18) features local families' coats of arms in the stained-glass windows; the background of its sibling Feeding of the Five Thousand so precisely shows the state of the construction of the Antwerp Cathedral in the background as to allow dating both paintings to the 1490s.[73]

69 Sixten Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth Century Devotional Painting* (Doornspijk: Davaco Publishers, 1984), 46.

70 I know of no use of "anatopism" in English until Coleridge in the early nineteenth century, but the Monteverdi opera *Proserpina rapita* [The Rape of Proserpine] (1630) was described at the time as an *anatopismo.*

71 Francesco Benaglio, *Jesus Teaching*, Sant'Anastasia church, Verona, Wikimedia, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/19/Cappella_lavagnoli%2C_affreschi_di_francesco_benaglio_o_michele_da_verona_01.JPG. See Stefano Zuffi, *European Art of the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 329.

72 Perugino, *Baptism of Christ* (ca. 1482), Sistine Chapel, Rome, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pietro_Perugino_-_Baptism_of_Christ_-_Sistine_Chapel_-_cat13a.jpg

73 *Wedding at Cana*, private collection, reproduced in *Genie ohne Namen*, ed. Budde and Roland Krischel, 476–77; *Feeding of the Five Thousand*, reproduced in Paul Pieper, *Die deutschen, niederländischen und italienischen Tafelbilder bis um 1530* (Münster: Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Münster, 1990), 479–82.

Fig. 15.17 Konrad Witz, *Draft of Fishes* (1444), Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Konrad_Witz._Der_Wunderbare_Fischzug_(1444).jpg

Fig. 15.18 *Wedding at Cana* (ca. 1490s), private collection.

Illusionistic Devices

Some paintings found ways to frame their subjects within a device existing in the depicted reality. Many Man of Sorrows featured a sill understood to be Pilate's balcony. A common example was the parapet used to invent a border between the depicted Jesus's space and the viewer's space, as in Antonello da Messina's (d. 1479) *Jesus Crowned with Thorns* (ca. 1470s).[74] Such parapets in paintings are

74 Antonello da Messina, *Jesus Crowned with Thorns* (ca. 1470s), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/435580

fully plain ken, in that they create a sense of illusion, reinforced by a heightened sense of distance between subject and viewer. They create a border between the painting and our world, and give an explanation for why the two are different.[75] The most famous are the *Pietàs* of Giovanni Bellini. In one the frame is obviously part of the sepulchre; in another, Jesus is leaning on the parapet.[76]

Fig. 15.19 Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna of the Pear* (ca. 1486), Accademia Carrara, Bergamo, Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giovanni_Bellini_-_Madonna_and_Child_-_WGA01696.jpg

Some painters used a cloth of honour to structure the illusionary space between the subject depicted and the viewer. Bellini and Titian (ca. 1488/90–1576), his student, employed this technique in their ca. 1509–10 depictions of the *Madonna and Child*.[77] Each takes care to make the cloth itself illusionistic, with modelled folds (Titian's has been unfolded in his imagination, before being pinned up for the scene) and the interplay of light and shadow. Potentially, the cloth implies a

75 Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 78. Similar frames were used by Andrea del Verrocchio (1435–88), Carlo Crivelli (ca. 1430), Ascoli Piceno (1480s, 1490s), Francesco Francia (1447–1517), and Vittore Carpaccio (ca. 1465–1526).

76 Giovanni Bellini, *Pietà* (ca. 1460–65), Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giovanni-Bellini-Pietá_(1465).jpg

77 Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child* (1509), Detroit Institute of Art, https://www.dia.org/art/collection/object/madonna-and-child-34522; Titian, *Madonna and Child* (ca. 1510), Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, https://www.khm.at/de/object/15d185eaa7/

throne just off camera, although Bellini's the *Madonna of the Pear* (which includes an anterior parapet) shows that sometimes the cloth was understood to fall alone (see Fig. 15.19).[78]

Sometimes, smaller details served to distance and unify the worlds of the viewer and the depicted. One German Veronica (an altar predella) is a painting of the cloth, which is "attached" to the panel with illusionistic wax blobs.[79] In the *Feast of the Rosary*, Dürer (see Fig. 15.20) painted the Baby Jesus on a sheet, and added a larger-than-life-sized fly on the same sheet. The inclusion of the oversized fly, relative to the baby, was meant to represent a real fly on the painting itself.[80] The fly increases the sense that this is a painting rather than a reality. It also creates a layering of realities: our real world, behind which a painted fly understood to be of our world, behind which a painted Jesus in the portrayed world. Parapets and flies unify the depicted and real spaces.

Fig. 15.20 Albrecht Dürer, *Feast of the Rose Garlands* (seventeenth-century copy of 1506 original) (detail), National Gallery, Prague, Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rosenkranzfest_1606_-_1612_KHM_GG_1900.jpg

Such strategies of representation speak in part to the plain ken—they locate events in a particular time and place—and in part to the deep—it is precisely the timelessness of these true events that allow them to happen anywhere, anytime.

78 See David Jaffé, ed., *Titian: Essays* (London: National Gallery, 2003), 74–77.

79 *Veronica* (ca. 1490), predella of the altar of the Söflingen Abbey, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich, https://veronicaroute.com/1490/04/07/1490-8/

80 The fly has disappeared from the original, but remains visible in copies. Jan Białostocki, *Dürer and his Critics* (Baden-Baden: Valentin Koerner, 1986), 20; Fedja Anzelewsky, *Albrecht Dürer: Das malerische Werk* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1971), 93–94, 187–99.

Contexts

More subtly, even invisibly, the artist's choice of subject and the meaning it conveyed were sometimes shaped by contemporary events. Federico da Montefeltro (1422–82) commissioned in 1472 from Piero della Francesca a Mary with Child, now known as the *Brera Madonna*: the Baby Jesus consonates with the newborn prince Guidobaldo, and to make the point clear the egg of an ostrich, the emblem of the Montefeltro family, hangs over Jesus from the ceiling.[81] Similarly, Masaccio (1401–28) created his *Tribute Money* in 1425, just when Florence was considering the creation of a new tax.[82]

Botticelli painted his *Mystical Nativity* under the influence of Girolamo Savonarola (1452–98). Indeed, the dancing angels flourished ribbons displaying the twelve privileges of the Virgin as outlined in Savonarola's Assumption Day sermon, which linked the Nativity of Jesus to the glory of Mary. Further, Greek text at the top reads:

> This picture, at the end of the year 1500, in the troubles of Italy, I Alessandro, in the half-time after the time, painted, according to the eleventh [chapter] of Saint John, in the second woe of the Apocalypse, during the release of the devil for three-and-a-half years; then he shall be bound in the twelfth [chapter] and we shall see [him buried] as in this picture.[83]

The context of the painting blurs time: the year 1500's spiritual crisis, associated with future apocalypse, is ended with the birth of Jesus which has already happened, fifteen hundred years earlier.

Gentile Bellini's (ca. 1429–1507) *Miracle of the Relic of the Holy Cross at the San Lorenzo Bridge* (ca. 1500) (see Fig. 15.21) is a painting about an accident, and its solution. In 1369, Philippe de Mézières (ca. 1327–1405) donated a cross relic to the confraternity of San Giovanni Evangelista in Venice. During a procession in the 1370s, on the San Lorenzo bridge, the dense crowds' jostling upset the man bearing the relic, which fell into the canal, but it floated over the water. It resisted all attempts

81 Piero della Francesca, *Brera Madonna* (1472–74), Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Piero_della_Francesca_046.jpg. See Robert Kirkbride, *Architecture and Memory: The Renaissance Studioli of Federico da Montefeltro* (New York: Columbia UP, 2008), 53.

82 Masaccio, *Tribute Money* (1425), Brancacci Chapel, Florence, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Masaccio7.jpg. See Peter Burke, *The Italian Renaissance* (London: Polity, 1987), 141.

83 Botticelli, *Mystical Nativity* (ca. 1500–01), National Gallery, London, Wikimedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mystic_Nativity,_Sandro_Botticelli.jpg. See Rab Hatfield, "Botticelli's Mystic Nativity, Savonarola and the Millennium," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 58 (1995): 88–114; Herbert P. Horne, Botticelli: Painter of Florence (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1980), 293–301.

at rescue until Andrea Vendramin, an oil merchant and important confraternity member, jumped in, and swam to it with piety and dignity. The cross relic was an important tool for healing humans and for protecting ships in the Adriatic, including some of Vendramin's. The confraternity later commissioned from Belllini three paintings of the relic's miracles. Even while taking a dramatic moment of time illusionistically—the scene is big and confusing, with the action happening incidentally and thus accidentally—the painting is anachronistic. It depicts an event from a century earlier witnessed by prominent figures from the artist's own time: the group of men on the right include portraits of Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, as Queen Caterina Cornaro of Cyprus (1454–1510) kneels on the left.[84]

Fig. 15.21 Gentile Bellini, *Miracle of the Relic of the Holy Cross at the San Lorenzo Bridge* (ca. 1500), Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Accademia_-_Miracolo_della_reliquia_della_Croce_al_ponte_di_San_Lorenzo_-_Gentile_Bellini_-_cat.568.jpg

Historicism

The end of our period sees some obvious attempts at historical cultural accuracy. In the Louvre *Circumcision* (Louvre, ca. 1520), perhaps done by Giulio Romano (d. 1546), we see the seven-lamp menorah and the helical, twisted columns of the Temple in Jerusalem.[85] Raphael's cartoon (ca. 1515) and tapestry (ca. 1519)

84 Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1988), 150–52, 222, 227–33; Kiril Petkov, "Relics and Society in Late Medieval and Renaissance Venice: The Miracles of the True Cross at the Bridges of San Lorenzo and San Lio," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 19 (2010): 267–82, https://doi.org/10.4000/crm.12013; Raimond van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, 19 vols. (New York: Hacker, 1970), XVII, 163–65.

85 Giulio Romano, *Circumcision* (ca. 1520), Louvre, Paris, https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010062272. This does not fit well with scripture, as Lk 2

of the *Healing of the Lame Man* (see Fig. 15.22) also featured Solomonic columns.[86] One engraving from the *Schatzbehalter* of Jesus's encounter with the adulterous woman decorates the Jerusalem Temple with stylized "oriental" writing.[87] Hems of garments featured a kind of writing that was "neo-Arabic" enough to give a sense of the Near West to eyes in the Far West.

Fig. 15.22 Raphael, cartoon for *The Healing of the Lame Man* (ca. 1515–16), Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:V%26A_-_Raphael,_The_Healing_of_the_Lame_Man_(1515).jpg

Through the fifteenth century, northern European art depicted Jerusalem as a northern European city. Contrary to geography, even as known at the time, Dürer in his *Lamentation* (ca. 1498) situated Jerusalem next to a major river.[88] Some images used visual clues to establish the city as Jerusalem or as generally oriental. One painting of the *Three Marys at the Tomb* (1420s) places Jerusalem in the background with a prominent seventh-century octagonal Dome of the Rock standing for the Second Jewish Temple of Jesus's day.[89] Here, the distinctively

suggests the circumcision occurred before taking Jesus to Jerusalem.

86 Raphael, *Healing of the Lame Man* (ca. 1515–16), V&A Museum, London, https://www.rct.uk/collection/912946/the-healing-of-the-lame-man. See also the images and information available at "The Healing of the Lame Man: Raphael Cartoon and Tapestry," *Italian Renaissance*, https://www.italian-renaissance-art.com/Lame-Man.html

87 Published in Béatrice Hernad, *Graphiksammlung des Humanisten Hartmann Schedel* (München: Prestel, 1990), fig. 73.

88 Albrecht Dürer, *Lamentation* (ca. 1498), Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, Wikimedia, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e4/Albrecht_Dürer_011.jpg

89 Hubert van Eyck(?), *Three Marys at the Tomb* (1420s), Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, https://rkd.nl/nl/explore/mages/2112. See Reiner Haussherr, "Spätgotische Ansichten der Stadt Jerusalem (Oder: War der Hausbuchmeister in Jerusalem?)," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 29–30 (1987–88):

oriental look created a sense of the first century, even though the Dome was constructed over six centuries after the events depicted in the foreground. Information from the Bible made clear that the Temple had been rectangular; the octagonal temple here corresponded to the current reality, assumed to represent the ancient reality, and was distinctive in a way that made it feel more like a Temple. The Master of the Housebook also renders the Dome of the Rock in his *Lamentation* (after 1480), amidst other buildings with distinctively oriental flat roofs.[90] One illustration in a French manuscript of eastern travel accounts (1450s) shows the Dome of the Rock alongside the Holy Sepulchre and the Aqsa Mosque, all arranged arbitrarily.[91] Botticelli's *Temptations of Christ* (1480–82), in the Sistine Chapel, for its Temple used the eastern facade of Santo Spirito in Sassia, which was a hospital church.[92] The link with a hospital consonates with the action at the centre of the composition, where the leper healed by Jesus presents himself to Temple authorities (Mt 8:1–4). Other details served to establish an oriental locale. The city in Enguerrand Quarton's (ca. 1410–66) *Coronation of the Virgin* (1453–54) boasts circular tower tops, which saved the city from appearing too much like Villeneuve-lès-Avignon.[93] One German painting (ca. 1475–1500) of Jesus as Man of Sorrows includes an elephant, and a dome with a crescent (see Fig. 15.23).[94]

Jerusalem depiction reached a new stage in the 1480s, as artists progressed beyond portraying individual buildings and began to illusionistically represent the city as a whole. One German *Lamentation* (ca. 1483) places the drama beneath a detailed panorama of the city, with the Holy Sepulchre, the Dome of the Rock, and the Via Dolorosa. Tiny Jesus figures carrying the cross show the connections between various parts of the city.[95] In part, this represents the greater availability of knowledge. In 1486, Bernhard von Breydenbach's (ca. 1440–97) *Peregrinationes in Terram Sanctam* [Pilgrimages to the Holy Land] was

47–70; Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone, 2010), 63–67.

90 Meister des Hausbuchs, *Lamentation of Christ* (after 1480), Gemäldegalerie, Dresden, https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Details/Index/346526

91 BnF MS Fr. 9087, fol. 85v, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b100215049/f182.item.r=9087.

92 Botticelli, *Temptations of Christ* (1480–82), Sistine Chapel, Rome, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:05_Tentaciones_de_Cristo_(Botticelli).jpg

93 Enguerrand Quarton, *Coronation of the Virgin* (1453–54), altar of the Chartreuse de Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, Wikimedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Enguerrand_Quarton,_Le_Couronnement_de_la_Vierge_(1454).jpg

94 See Carla Keyvanian, *Hospitals and Urbanism in Rome, 1200–1500* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 344–52.

95 Workshop of Wolfgang Katzheimer the Elder, epitaph for Adelheid Tucher (ca. 1483), Museum Tucherschloss und Hirsvogelsaal, Nuremberg, https://www.bavarikon.de/object/bav:TKS-PAT-0000000007000012; Haussherr, "Spätgotische Ansichten," 63–66 has worked out the geography of the city.

published in Mainz, with illustrative woodcuts by Erhard Reuwich (1445–1505), including a detailed panorama of Jerusalem (see Chapter 5).[96] These herald a specificity that endured into the next century. Jan van Scorel (1495–1562) places a similarly exact Jerusalem in his ca. 1526 *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*.[97]

Fig. 15.23 Master of the Aachen Marian Life, *Man of Sorrows* (detail) in *Life of Marie* (ca. 1475–1500), photograph by Triptych (2020), Wikimedia, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marienleben_Aachener_Domschatz_linker_Flügel.jpg

As the world became more globalized, aspects of the Core found their way even to the Far West. In some sense these were therefore modern—relatively recent, and relatively rare—but they came from the east. Because of a sense that time moved more slowly in eastern cultures, oriental details could serve as ancient details. One contemporary humanist commented, approvingly, on the Greeks having maintained the same fashion of clothes since the time of Jesus.[98] When icons came to the Far West, they were often taken as ancient, for this very reason. There is also a deep-ken overtone here, because many oriental, ancient objects were expensive in the fifteenth-century Far West, and therefore could symbolically project wealth.[99]

In the Far West, oriental carpets become popular in the fifteenth century, especially those from the South Caucasus region and Anatolia. Representations

96 Erhard Reuwich, *Panorama of Jerusalem* (1486), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/338300

97 Jan van Scorel, *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem* (ca. 1526), Centraal Museum, Utrecht, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jan_van_Scorel_-_Triptych_with_The_Entry_of_Christ_into_Jerusalem,_saints_and_on_the_outside_of_the_wings,_patrons_of..._-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

98 Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Le vite*, ed. Aulo Greco, 2 vols. (Florence: Istituto nazionale di studi sul rinascimento, 1970), I, 19.

99 Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 97–107.

in paintings seem to precisely represent actual rugs; some contemporary rugs have survived and match those in paintings. On the reverse of his *Portrait of a Young Man Praying* (ca. 1485), Hans Memling (ca. 1430–94) effected an early still life by arranging flowers in a majolica jug with the IHS monogram, atop a Caucasian rug.[100] The flat and hanging portions of the carpet have distinct vanishing points, suggesting that an optical projector was used for each half, refocusing the lens between them, rather than a unified, purely geometrical approach.[101] The Portuguese *Annunciation* in the Polyptych of the Convento da Madre de Deus (ca. 1515) places the action on top of a woven rug with a distinctive Kongo pattern (see Fig. 15.24).

Fig. 15.24 Workshop of Jorge Afonso, *Annunciation* (ca. 1515), Museu de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, photograph by Sailko (2016), Wikimedia, CC BY 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jorge_alfonso,_retablo_della_madre_di_dio,_1515,_04_annunciazione.jpg

100 Hans Memling, *Portrait of a Young Man Praying* (ca. 1485), Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, https://www.museothyssen.org/en/collection/artists/memling-hans/flowers-jug-verso

101 David Hockney, *Secret Knowledge* (New York: Viking, 2001), 64–65; David G. Stork, "Did Hans Memling Employ Optical Projections When Painting Flower Still-Life?," *Leonardo* 38 (2005): 155–60, https://doi.org/10.1162/0024094053722435 disagrees. On Hockey see Noa Turel, *Living Pictures: Jan van Eyck and Painting's First Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2020), 13.

Fig. 15.25 Francesco Benaglio, *Madonna and Child* (ca. 1465–69), National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, public domain, https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.1183.html

Similarly, distinctive porcelains were rare enough to signify the Orient, and its wealth. These might be Chinese porcelains, or Islamicate copies of Chinese porcelains, that made their way to Europe. In the later fifteenth century, blue-and-white porcelain appears in Jesus paintings in Italy. The Book of Hours of Engelbert of Nassau (1470s–80s) decorates its borders with porcelains, two themselves decorated with the IHS initials.[102] Francesco Benaglio's (ca. 1432–92) *Madonna and Child* (see Fig. 15.25), from the late 1460s, puts pears in a Jingdezhen lotus-pod porcelain, alongside other objects with symbolic resonance: a cherry and a coral necklace for Jesus's blood, an apple for original sin. In Mantegna's

102 BodL MS Douce 219, fol. 145v–46r has two IHS porcelains. The main illustrations are ca. 1470s, but the porcelains and other decorations are ca. 1480s. See fol. 153r, https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/5a7067a1-a61c-4bbc-bca7-f7b0fcee812c/surfaces/2255812c-dcc2-4ecb-a77f-fedf7591a332/ and fol. 200r, https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/12b9c3c8-7a8b-420e-a7dc-4af02b0a4348/surfaces/5aca9b54-e185-4eed-b650-df69e9021eb1/. See Thomas Kren and Scot McKendrick, *Illuminating the Renaissance* (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003), 134–37; Celia Fisher, "Flowers and Plants, the Living Iconography," in *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography*, ed. Colum Hourihane (London: Routledge, 2017), 453–64, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315298375-37

Adoration of the Magi, from the end of the century, one of the Magi—himself eastern—offers Jesus gold coins in a Chinese porcelain cup.[103] Such objects could represent the East in a plain-ken way, but they were also rare enough to signify importance and wealth, and so could also with the deep ken enhance the majesty of the main subject.[104]

Fig. 15.26 Giovanni Bellini, *Presentation of Christ in the Temple* (ca. 1460) (detail), Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice, Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giovanni_bellini,_presentazione_di_ges%C3%B9_al_tempio,_1469_ca._01.jpg

Associated with Judaism, earrings evoked first-century Palestine. Mary wears an earring both in Giovanni Francesco Maineri's *Virgin and St. Joseph* (1489–1504)[105] and in Giovanni Bellini's updated version (ca. 1460) of Mantegna's (ca. 1454)

103 Andrea Mantegna, *Adoration of the Magi* (ca. 1495–1505), Getty Center, Los Angeles, https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103RHD

104 Mirella Levi D'Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance: Botanical Symbolism in Italian Painting* (Florence: Olschki, 1977), 89–93, 296–99; Anne Gerritsen, *The City of Blue and White: Chinese Porcelain and the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2020), 131–33, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108753104; Jessica Harrison-Hall, "Early Ming Ceramics: Rethinking the Status of Blue-and-White," in *Ming China: Courts and Contacts, 1400–1450*, ed. Craig Clunas, Jessica Harrison-Hall, and Yu Ping Luk (London: The British Museum, 2016), 77–86; A. I. Spriggs, "Oriental Porcelain in Western Paintings, 1450–1700," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 36 (1964–66): 73–87 (73–74).

105 Giovanni Francesco Maineri, *Virgin and St. Joseph* (1489–1504), Museo del Prado, Madrid, Wikimedia, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maineri-sagrada_familia.jpg

Presentation (see Fig. 15.26).[106] Bellini painted this in Venice when Giacomo della Marca (1393–1476) was there preaching that the Jewish earring was the female equivalent of circumcision. As a Jewish symbol, the earring gave these images a cultural accuracy, in the plain-ken sense; at the same time, contemporary fashion had already opened the door, just, to upper-class Christian women wearing them.[107]

Romani peoples began appearing in Far Western art, and their ties to the Orient—the exonym "Gypsy" came from "Egypt"—allowed them to also represent the ancient.[108] A tradition developed of a man helping in the Descent of Jesus's body from the cross, depicted with darker skin, a turban, and sometimes striped leggings.[109] A ca. 1460 copper engraving of the *Crucifixion* renders a similar man, crouched in what was perceived as a distinctively "Gypsy" posture, forging the nails to be used.[110] In his *Entombment* (ca. 1425), Robert Campin (d. 1444) has fitted Mary Magdalene with a flat turban, a Romani headdress, and faced her away from the viewer, giving us a better view of it.[111] Jacques Daret (ca. 1404–70), in his *Nativity* (ca. 1434–35), put a

106 Giovanni Bellini, *Presentation of Christ in the Temple* (ca. 1460), Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bellini_maria1.jpg. See Brigit Blass-Simmen, Giovanni Carlo Federico Villa, Neville Rowley, ed., *Bellini/Mantegna: Masterpieces Face to Face: The Presentation of Jesus at the Temple* (Milan: Silvana, 2018).

107 Diane Owen Hughes, "Distinguishing Signs: Ear-Rings, Jews and Franciscan Rhetoric in the Italian Renaissance City," *Past & Present* 112 (1986): 3–59 (40–42, 58).

108 For background, see Miriam Eliav-Feldon, *Renaissance Impostors and Proofs of Identity* (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 121–36, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137291370; Erwin Pokorny, "The Gypsies and Their Impact on Fifteenth Century Western European Iconography," in *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence*, ed. Jaynie Anderson (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2009), 597–601; Erwin Pokorny, "Das Zigeunerbild in der altdeutschen Kunst: Ethnographisches Interesse und Antiziganismus," in *Menschenbilder Beiträge zur Altdeutschen Kunst*, ed. Andreas Tacke und Stefan Heinz (Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2011), 97–110; Margarita Torrione, "El traje antiguo de los gitanos: alteridad y castigo (Iconografía de los siglos XV–XVIII)," *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 536 (1995): 19–42.

109 An early example is the triptych of the Master of Flémalle, as seen in the fragment in the Städel Museum in Frankfurt, and the copy in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. The Liverpool copy is reproduced on Wikimedia, here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Descent-from-the-cross-CopyCampin.jpg. The Frankfurt fragment is reproduced here on *Rational and Sensual Art*, https://rational-sensual-art.tumblr.com/post/19901039883/master-of-flémalle-the-crucified-thief-around.

110 Master of the Banderoles, *Crucifixion* (ca. 1450–75), Albertina, Vienna, https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search=/record/objectnumbersearch=[DG1926/928]&showtype=record .

111 Robert Campin, *Entombment* (ca. 1425), Courtauld Gallery, London, https://courtauld.ac.uk/highlights/the-seilern-triptych/

similar hat on Salome, the apocryphal midwife whose hand was paralyzed when she reached to verify Mary's physical virginity.[112] Derick Baegert's (d. after 1515) *Saint Veronica* (ca. 1478) may depict a Romani woman, with darker skin, a flat turban, and a pendant earring at the right edge, looking up at what might have been a Crucifixion in the original composition.[113] The grey-skinned soldier depicted in profile looking at Jesus in Bosch's *Ecce Homo* (ca. 1490) (see Fig. 15.27) may represent a Romani: beyond the skin colour, he also wears an earring and the flat turban.

Fig. 15.27 Hieronymus Bosch, *Ecce Homo* (ca. 1490), Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, public domain, https://sammlung.staedelmuseum.de/en/work/ecce-homo

These depictions reflected their contemporary world—Romani are known to have been in Campin's Brussels in the 1420s—but also reached towards the eastern, more ancient, historical reality of the plain-ken Jesus. The historian Johannes Aventinus (1477–1534) recorded that Romani, living by "theft, rapine, and divination," falsely claim that they were in exile from Egypt, where their

112 Jacques Daret, *Nativity* (ca. 1434–35), Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, https://www.museothyssen.org/en/collection/artists/daret-jacques/nativity

113 Derick Baegert, *Saint Veronica* (ca. 1477–78), Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, https://www.museothyssen.org/en/collection/artists/baegert-derick/saint-veronica-and-group-knights

ancestors had refused shelter to child Jesus after Herod's massacre.[114] Andreas von Regensburg (d. after 1442) was less specific, just noting their claims of origin in Egypt, which he linked to Jesus's Flight.[115]

Our period sees depictions of Africans playing a similar role in religious art. Over centuries a tradition developed that one of the Magi was a black African,[116] and Africans had long appeared in Far Western Jesus art, especially in the retinue of the Magus coming from the East to the Nativity.[117] In the middle of the fifteenth century, painters in the Low Countries gave one of the Magi, named Balthasar, subtle African features.[118] Mantegna is probably the earliest painter to emphasize those African traits on him (see Fig. 15.28). This style of depiction then became the norm, especially in Venice and Antwerp, culminating in the many *Adorations* that Gerard David (ca. 1460–1523) and his workshop made in the first quarter of the sixteenth century (see Fig. 15.29). Jan Gossaert's (ca. 1478–1532) *Adoration* (ca. 1512) honours Balthasar with a crown inscribed with his name,[119] suggesting increased interest in the Magus as an individual holy figure. In some depictions, the Magus appears Ethiopian and his attendant West African, perhaps reflecting difference in social status.[120]

114 Johannes Aventinus, *Annales ducum Boiariae*, ed, Sigmund Riezler, Sämmtliche Werke 3, 2 vols. (Munich: Kaiser, 1883), II, 518 (book 7, ch. 25).

115 Andreas von Regensburg, *Diarium sexennale*, in *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Georg Leidinger (Munich: M. Rieger'sche Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1903), 319. Later legends remembered a gypsy blacksmith who forged the Crucifixion nails. The thief of the fourth nail, intended to kill Jesus directly by piercing his heart, has been identified in other legends variously as a gypsy or as a Jew who became the progenitor of the gypsies.

116 Faustus of Riez, *Praeter sermones pseudo-eusebianos opera accedunt ruricci epistulae*, Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 21 (Prague: Tempsky, 1891), 253; John of Hildesheim, *The Three Kings of Cologne*, ed. C. Horstmann (London: Trubner, 1886), 237.

117 Lorenzo Monaco, *Adoration of the Magi* (ca. 1421), Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Don_Lorenzo_Monaco_002.2.jpg

118 For example, Dieric Bouts, *Life of the Virgin* (ca. 1445), Museo del Prado, Madrid, https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/triptych-of-the-life-of-the-virgin/ed28d5db-1f03-441e-bbc4-010786805dde?searchMeta=bouts

119 Jan Gossaert, *Adoration of the Magi* (ca. 1512), National Gallery, London, https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/jan-gossaert-jean-gossart-the-adoration-of-the-kings

120 For example, *Adoration of the Magi* (late fifteenth century), National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.41654.html

Fig. 15.28 Andrea Mantegna, *Adoration of the Magi* (ca. 1463) from *Triptych*, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Andrea_Mantegna_-_Trittico_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

Fig. 15.29 Gerard David, *Adoration of the Magi* (ca. 1520), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, public domain, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436104

It can be difficult to say what counts as historicism and what as anachronism. Images with Turks (note the tall conical hats—alongside the turbans—in Mantegna's *Adoration* above) are an attempt to create a historically realistic setting. However, there were no Turks at the time of Jesus's birth; the contemporary Xiongnu might have been their ancestors, but they were 4,000 km away from Jerusalem. Is this anachronism, or badly done historicism?

Fig. 15.30 Titian, *Resurrection* (1520–22), Santi Nazaro e Celso, Brescia, Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Polittico_averoldi_01.jpg

A recognition that Jesus lived during the classical period allowed artists to use classicizing details to historicize. Mantegna in his *Holy Family with Saint John* (ca. 1500) poses a child Jesus like a classical statue, with something like a Roman cloak thrown over his shoulder.[121] One Venetian relief (ca. 1530) put Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* in a classical context, presenting it as a part of the classical world with a style it sought to emulate.[122] This Christ was itself posed

121 Andrea Mantegna, *Holy Family with Saint John* (ca. 1500), National Gallery, London, https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/andrea-mantegna-the-holy-family-with-saint-john-the-baptist

122 Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 41 (published as the frontispiece). Maurice L. Shapiro, "Renaissance

in a classical *contrapposto* pose. Titian's Jesus in the central *Resurrection* of the Averoldi Polyptych (1520–22) puts weight on his right leg while bending his left knee, again in *contrapposto* position, and his outstretched arms echo the classical *adlocutio*, with a flag raised instead of a finger (see Fig. 15.30). That the classical also served as an ideal allowed a deep-ken power to underline what might look like a purely plain-ken approach. One (1520s?) plaquette of the *Washing of the Disciples' Feet* classicizes the clothing and architecture: here, the historical accident of Jesus living during a time later considered normative meant that an image could be both deep ken in its evocation of those norms as well as plain ken in being historically accurate.[123]

Subjects

Models and the Imitation of Nature

The uncanny valley theory suggests that viewers have a relatively positive reaction to inhuman and human appearances, but a negative reaction to the "uncanny" appearances of the almost-human. To someone personally familiar with Jesus, the plain-ken illusionism might provoke a negative response, like an uncanny valley. The illusionistic Jesus does not *quite* look like a Jesus.

Many of the plain-ken art techniques were based on the imitation of nature, human or otherwise, a move which—in a wild logical leap—substituted apparent reality for divine reality. Using models at a single time in a single place reduced divine art to a studio exercise.

At the beginning of our period, the visual arts felt a new push to look directly at the mundane world. In his ca. 1400 *Libro dell'arte* [Book of Art], Cennino Cennini (ca. 1370–1440), a student of a student of a student of Giotto, advised that "the most perfect steersman that you can have, and the best helm, lie in the triumphal gateway of copying from nature. And this outdoes all other models." An artist seeking a "good style" for "natural"-looking mountains should "get some large stones, rugged, and not cleaned up; and copy them from nature, applying the lights and the darks as your system requires."[124] Note that Cennini

or Neo-Classic? A Forgery after the Antique Reconsidered," *The Art Bulletin* 44 (1962): 131–35 dates it over 250 years later.

123 Circle of Andrea Briosci, *Christ Washing the Disciples' Feet* (1520s?), Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, https://collections.ashmolean.org/object/749380

124 Cennino d'Andrea Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook*, trans. Daniel V. Thompson, Jr., 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1960), II, 15, 57.

inherited this empirical attitude through the Giotto tradition, although tradition and empiricism were considered alternative routes to such knowledge.

This was part of a general enthusiasm for mirroring the natural world. For the panels of the Baptistery doors, Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378–1455) sought "to imitate nature" and develop the "network of lines [*lineamenti*]" for the perspective effect.[125] This suggests that imitating nature and creating networks of lines were thought of as parallel processes. Brunelleschi's experiment before the Baptistery, too, modelled nature; his painting included "the Misericordia up to the arch and corner of the sheep [market], and from the side with the column of the miracle of St. Zenobius up to the corner of the straw [market]."[126] Alberti insisted that he based his understanding of painting from the fundamentals of nature, from which the artist must work with "diligence" and "attention and care." Alberti denounced those painters who, ignoring nature, use their own intelligence to achieve results, for they did "not learn to paint correctly but persist in errors."[127]

In the fifteenth century, studies from live, male models became normal. A sketch made of live models in preparation for a painting might still have them in contemporary street clothes, leaving the artist to execute the wardrobe change as he did the painting itself. In the next century, artists more frequently took this principled practice to the extreme, often illegal, of using female models for female subjects.[128] Andrea del Verrocchio (ca. 1435– 88) made his students draw from nature, sometimes a nature enhanced for visual effect, as when the models were draped with cloth coated with clay to hang heavier.[129] Michelangelo agreed to make a statue of *Christ Carrying the Cross* (1514) "as large as in nature."[130]

It was one of Verrocchio's students, Leonardo da Vinci, who was most insistent on preferring nature over a tradition of masters: "The painter's works will have little merit if he takes for his guide other pictures, but if he will learn from natural things he will bear good fruit…" Indeed, the painter should make his mind like a mirror of nature: "Those who study only the authorities and not the works of nature are in art the grandsons and not the sons of nature, which is the supreme guide of the good authorities." This attitude against tradition

125 Lorenzo Ghiberti, *Denkwürdigkeiten* (*I Commentarii*), ed. Julius von Schlosser, 2 vols. (Berlin: Bard, 1912), I, 48–49.

126 Antonio di Tuccio Manetti, *The Life of Brunelleschi*, trans. Catherine Enggass (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1970), 42–45.

127 Alberti, *On Painting*, 55–56, 62–63, 78.

128 Claire Van Cleave, *Master Drawings of the Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2008), 24–25.

129 Serge Bramly, *Leonardo: The Artist and the Man*, trans. Sian Reynolds (London: Penguin, 1992), 78.

130 Gaetano Milanesi, ed., *Le lettere di Michelangelo Buonarroti* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1875), 641.

spilled outside of art, and Leonardo complained that "Whoever in discussion adduces authority uses not intellect but rather memory."[131]

Leonardo reflected on the history of this shift, starting back in the late thirteenth century. Then, the young shepherd named Giotto drew his goats, "being guided by nature to his art," and became the first artist to copy nature rather than a tradition of masters. Not satisfied with the mere imitation of his own master, Giotto went beyond "not only the masters of his time but all those of many bygone ages," an idea that became commonplace, repeated, for example, in Vasari. Giotto's students, ironically, were so taken with the results of Giotto's break with tradition that they slavishly imitated the results, creating a new tradition. Only Masaccio found more inspiration in Giotto's ideas than his images, and "showed by his perfect works how those who take for their standard anyone but nature—the mistress of all masters—weary themselves in vain."[132] Note that Giotto, Masaccio, and Leonardo himself were all country boys, and grew up in an environment that might have invited more careful observation of nature than a busy, ugly city would have.

How might this have looked in practice? Especially for his *Last Supper*, Leonardo reflected on the kind of person he needed to depict, and then sought out a real-life model with corresponding physical attributes.[133] Leonardo threatened to base his Judas on the prior who commissioned the work, but left Jesus's head incomplete for want of a natural model; he felt, in Vasari's words, "incapable of achieving the celestial divinity the image of Christ required."[134] Vasari and Gian Paolo Lomazzo (1538–92) recalled stories about Leonardo spending a day stalking an interesting-looking person, even into the bathhouse to see his quarry nude, or carefully observing a criminal's face during torture. One story remembered that Leonardo, keen to depict rural laughter, located

131 Leonardo Da Vinci, *Codex Arundel*, BL Arundel MS 263, 1478–1518, f. 387r; Leonardo da Vinci, *Notebooks*, ed. Irma A. Richter and Thereza Wells, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1952), I, 95; II, 235, 276–77. See Bramly, *Leonardo*, 78, 159; Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci: The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 83–84. At times Leonardo makes things more complicated: he talks of nature being behind the visible world, and of causes being behind nature. Bramly, *Leonardo*, 275; Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci*, 284; Leonardo Da Vinci, *Codex Arundel*, 398v.

132 Leonardo Da Vinci, Milan, Ambrosian Library, *Codex Atlantus*, fol. 387r; Leonardo da Vinci, *Notebooks*, ed. Richter and Wells, 213–14; Vasari, *Lives*, 15–36. See Baxandall, *Painting*, 119–20; Bramly, *Leonardo*, 75–76; Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci*, 83–84.

133 Carlo Amoretti, *Memorie storiche su la vita, gli studj, e le opere di Lionardo da Vinci* (Milan: Giusti, Ferrario, 1804), 62–63; J. P. Richter, ed., *Scritti Letterari di Leonardo da Vinci* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1883), 333–35. On his modelling process in general, see Giambattista Giraldi, *Discorsi* (Venice: Giolito, 1554), 193–94.

134 Vasari, *Lives*, 289–91.

the appropriate peasants, set up a feast for them, fed them outrageous humour with the food, and mentally recorded their gestures long enough to retreat home to produce a drawing so true to nature that people who saw it themselves joined the peasants in laughing.[135] Here, Leonardo was not just re-creating a visual scene, but re-creating an emotion. This was plain-ken representation of an emotion—his goal was to recreate specific examples that had happened in spacetime.

Unfortunately, Jesus, like a dragon, was not easily found in nature. Leonardo has an answer for the dragon problem: an artist should combine dragon-like aspects of things found in nature: "take for its head that of a mastiff or setter, for its eyes those of a cat, for its ears those of a porcupine, for its nose that of a greyhound, with the eyebrows of a lion, the temples of an old cock and the neck of a water-tortoise." In another Vasari story, Leonardo collected small animals to use in modelling the hair of a medusa, and became so intent on his work to be, luckily, oblivious to the stench of the rotting mass of snakes, bats, lizards, and butterflies.[136] There may be good reason why the angel's wings in Leonardo's *Annunciation* look like bird's wings.

At the same time, some observers noted that, in a deep way, each painter's efforts to imitate nature, or indeed tradition, was mediated by the painter himself. Ridolfo Ghirlandaio (1483–1561) drew on several sources for the faces of the supporting cast in his *Procession to Calvary* (ca. 1505).[137] Vasari commented on the "many very beautiful heads, taken from life and made with love." One, the man on the far right, might model his father. Two soldiers to the right of the cross appear to be inspired by Leonardo drawings—so not "taken from life," but taken from an image taken from life.[138]

Some scholars have argued that even if a painting represents a snapshot, the painting itself endures in time. Leonardo meditated on the relationship between painting and music in terms of time and space. Musical sound dies "instantly after its creation." Painting, in contrast, endures in time, and thus "shows itself to you as something alive while in fact it is confined to a surface." Thus, a painting, like the person it represents, appears alive because it exists in space.

135 Gio[vanni] Paolo Lomazzo, *Trattato dell' arte della pittura, scultura ed architettura*, 3 vols. (Rome: Saverio del-monte, 1844), I, 175–77; *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. Edward MacCurdy, 2 vols. (London: Cape, 1919), II, 512. Martin Clayton, *Leonardo da Vinci: The Divine and the Grotesque* (London: Royal Collection, 2002), 13 casts doubts on the veracity of these traditions.

136 Vasari, *Lives*, 288; da Vinci, *Notebooks*, ed. Richter and Wells, II, 247. See Bramly, *Leonardo*, 98; Clayton, *Leonardo da Vinci*, 157.

137 Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, *The Procession to Calvary* (ca. 1505), National Gallery, London, https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/ridolfo-ghirlandaio-the-procession-to-calvary

138 Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, 14 vols. (Florence: Le Monnier, 1855), XI, 287.

Strikingly, Leonardo saw the tension not between a painting's representing an instant of time and its existing beyond an instant, but rather between its illusion of liveliness and its two-dimensionality.[139]

The idea that "every painter paints himself," according to his own conditioning, has been attributed to half a dozen Renaissance figures, suggesting its currency. Leonardo, too, has been accused of reworking the images of his carefully pursued real-life models to make them more like his own face. Dürer noted in 1513 that just as "every mother is well pleased with her own child," so too "many painters paint figures resembling themselves." Ultimately, he throws up his hands: "I know not certainly what the ultimate measure of true beauty is." If their subjects resembled the artists, so too could the artists resemble their subject: in 1500, Dürer executed a self-portrait that bore a striking resemblance to a number of depictions of Jesus (see Chapter 16).[140]

Art historian Noa Turel has noted that description of art as made *au vif* refers to the product not the process, not painted "from life," but resulting in a painting made "into life."[141] Renaissance critics applauded the lifelike nature of artists' depictions. Pointing to Giotto's lines' ability to meet nature, the chronicler Filippo Villani (1325–1407) reported that his images "seem to live and exhale breath."[142] The poet Cristoforo Landino (d. 1498) and Vasari both praised the "vivacity" (*vivacità*, from the Latin *vivo* [to live]) of the sculptures of Donatello.[143] Instantly, the new lifelike images somehow trumped the old living icons, in which, according to the Florentine Giambattista Gelli (1498–1563), portraits with "wide open eyes which appear more like monsters than like people." Gelli compared Greek icons to "peoples' flayed hides or to pieces of laundry lying on a wall." Such flaying and flattening has, in fact, its own realism in reducing

139 Emanuel Winternitz, ed., *Leonardo da Vinci as a Musician* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1982), 210–11 (no. 29). See Etienne Souriau, "Time in the Plastic Arts," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 7 (1949): 294–307.

140 Albrecht Dürer, Self-Portrait (1500), Alta Pinakothek, Munich, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Albrecht_Dürer_-_1500_self-portrait_(High_resolution_and_detail).jpg. Albrecht Dürer, *The Writings of Albrecht Dürer*, trans. William Martin Conway (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958), 180, 244. See Harry Berger, Jr., *Fictions of the Pose: Rembrandt against the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000), 79–94; Clayton, *Leonardo da Vinci*, 130.

141 Noa Turel, "Living Pictures: Rereading 'au vif,' 1350–1550," *Gesta* 50 (2011): 163–82, https://doi.org/10.2307/41550555; Turel, *Living Pictures*, 22–30.

142 Filippo Villani, *Liber de civitatis Florentiae famosis civibus* (Florence: Mazzoni, 1847), 35.

143 Vasari, *Le vite*, III, 252; Vasari, *Lives*, 152. See Ottavio Morisani, "Art Historians and Art Critics–III: Cristoforo Landino," *The Burlington Magazine* 95 (1953): 267–70 (269). Note almost identical language in the *Libro* of Antonio Billi: Cornelio de Fabriczy, ed., "Libro di Antonio Billi," *Archivio storico Italiano* 7 (1891): 299–368 (365).

a three-dimensional being to two dimensions. Gelli favoured proper, plain-ken paintings, which "imitate nature as art should do."[144]

Such Renaissance critics believed that these images *seemed* to live. The Christian faithful had known that powerful traditional icons *actually* lived—they wept, moved, and worked miracles. In contrast, the Renaissance lost faith in the living icons and thus were able to get excited about pseudo-living images, images that merely *seemed* to live. Although no human can produce a living icon on demand, a skilled human could make a lifelike (not "almost-living") image. Presumably, the Renaissance artists were taking life as a desideratum, as a mark of power, quality, and authority from icons.

Image Quotations

Some images appear within another image, like one text "quoting" another. This may allow for an associative deep-ken power, but can also add to the plain-ken illusionism: an image is an unlikely subject for an image, and so an image of an image does not feel like an image. Much depends on the context and the nature of the quoted image: is it merely an image, or it is a powerful visual artifact?[145] The latter may be the case especially in Orthodox icons, which are sometimes nested, like Russian dolls: an image of an image of an image. This occurs sometimes in the Far West as well: fol. 16v of BodL MS Douce 219 presents a Jesus-image (on Veronica's veil) within an image (a pilgrim badge showing Veronica) within an image (of a badge collection).[146]

The Neri di Bicci workshop in Florence began creating images with embedded images (*Rahmenbilder*). These were often Marian. This might have been a way to adorn older images, and might have been created for liturgical reasons, to replace or echo the actual crucifix physically placed on the altar. In an example in Berlin, the icon even casts a shadow (see Fig. 15.31).[147] Domenico di Zanobi's (fl. 1476–81) *Coronation of the Virgin* in the San Miniato (1476) is

144 Giovanni Battista Gelli, *Venti vite d'artisti* (Florence: Cellini, 1896), 13–14. On naturalism and idealism see Burke, *Italian Renaissance*, 153–54.

145 From the middle of the fifteenth century representations of miracle-working images became common, and in the hundred years after Trent this interest spiked. David Freedberg, *Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 300–01.

146 BodL MS Douce 219, fol. 16v (main illustrations ca. 1470s, but borders ca. 1480s), https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/5a7067a1-a61c-4bbc-bca7-f7b0fcee812c/surfaces/a8253922-0bfc-48d5-ae3f-a21af7987aea/. See Kren and McKendrick, *Illuminating the Renaissance*, 134–37; Fisher, "Flowers and Plants," 453–64.

147 Isabella Augart, *Rahmenbilder: Konfigurationen der Verehrung im Frühneuzeitlichen Italien* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2018).

technically a coronation of the *icon* of the Madonna and Child.[148] Fra Angelico's *San Marco Altarpiece* (ca. 1438–43) has an embedded icon at the base, which could be a reference to predellas or to other parts of the altar.[149]

Fig. 15.31 Neri di Bicci workshop, *Madonna and Child with Saints* (ca. 1470–75), Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, public domain, https://recherche.smb.museum/detail/863659

Sometimes, a specific work of art already in existence was quoted in the new piece. The *Spinario* was an ancient sculpture of a seated boy holding and examining his left foot (see Fig. 15.32). It had been recognized as important and, therefore, in a deep-ken way, meaningful, without consensus as to whom it represented. Was this Absalom, the son of King David, who had no blemish even on his foot (2 Sam. 14:25)? Was it Priapus, the Greek fertility god? Was it Jesus, the Good Shepherd? In the Renaissance, plain-ken inspiration prompted a new idea: it did not represent anyone in particular, just a random boy.

148 Domenico di Zanobi, *Coronation of the Virgin* (1476), Museo della Misericordia, San Miniato, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Domenico_di_Zanobi_(maestro_della_natività_johnson),_incoronazione_della_vergine,_1480_ca,_03.JPG

149 Fra Angelico, San Marco Altarpiece (ca. 1438–43), Museo di San Marco, Florence, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fra_Angelico_060.jpg

Fig. 15.32 The *Spinario* (ca. 323 to 30 BC), Capitolini, Rome, photograph by Sixtus (2006), CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lo_Spinario.JPG

Florence, in 1401, saw a competition to execute door panels for the Baptistery, on the theme of the Sacrifice of Isaac, in a style consonant with the current panels from the 1330s. Brunelleschi tied with Ghiberti, but when offered a joint commission, immodestly declined. His contest entry's portrayal of the sacrifice was rich in Old–New Testament consonance: wheat straw represented the Eucharist, and water, baptism—which consonated further with the nature of the Baptistery itself. In the lower right plane, Brunelleschi quoted the *Spinario*: a servant sits in the distinctive pose to remove a thorn, resonating with Jesus the Good Shepherd removing sin.[150]

150 Benjamin of Tudela, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, trans. Marcus Nathan Adler (London: Oxford UP, 1907), 7; Magister Gregorius, *De Mirabilius Urbis Romae*, in G. McN. Rushforth, "Magister Gregorius de Mirabilibus Urbis Romae," *Journal of Roman Studies* 9 (1919): 14–58 (49). See Leonard Barkan, *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1999), 148–56; Loren W. Partridge, *Art of Renaissance Florence, 1400–1600* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 37. Filippo Brunelleschi, *Sacrifice of Isaac* (ca. 1401–02), Musei del Bargello, Florence, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brunelleschi%27s_Competition_Panel.jpg

The *Spinario* continued to appear in Jesus art. Perugino included a *Spinario* in his *Baptism of Christ* (ca. 1482).[151] Here, the figure was removing not a thorn, but his clothes, in preparation for baptism, a rite that would also remove the thorn of sin. That sense of baptismal delivery from sin might also be in play with the *Spinario* figure in Luca Signorelli's (ca. 1441–1523) *Madonna and Child* (1490s), where even without an explicit baptismal context the Baby Jesus would be recognized as a turning point in humanity's relation with sin, and the river in the background might indicate baptism (see Fig. 15.33). Similarly, the ancient Arrotino sculpture of a blade-sharpener appears in Domenico Ghirlandaio's (1448–94) *Baptism* (1480s), again representing someone undressing for baptism.[152]

Fig. 15.33 Luca Signorelli, *Madonna and Child* (1490s), Alte Pinakothek, Munich, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://www.sammlung.pinakothek.de/en/artwork/2mxqlAd48b

These examples may have had a historicizing effort in combining classical sculpture with the life of Jesus who lived in classical times. This also speaks to broader contemporary art trends. Around 1500 in Italy, antique-style statues were installed as a reaction against the recent dominance of "modern" painting.[153] Pope Nicholas V (1397–1455) had planned to mount an Egyptian obelisk with a bronze statue of a triumphant Jesus brandishing his cross.[154]

151 Perugino, *Baptism of Christ* (ca. 1482), Sistine Chapel, Rome, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pietro_Perugino_-_Baptism_of_Christ_-_Sistine_Chapel_-_cat13a.jpg

152 Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Baptism* (1480s), Santa Maria Novella, Florence, https://www.wga.hu/html_m/g/ghirland/domenico/6tornab/62tornab/6baptis.html

153 Nagel, *Controversy of Renaissance*, 103–02.

154 Giannozzo Manetti, *Vita Nicolai V. Summi Pontificis*, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, ed. Lodovico Antonio Muratori, 25 vols. (Milan: Societatis Palatinæ in Regia

One ancient statue of Jesus was less ambiguous, as its primary consonance would have been with Jesus itself, and so its quotations would have served plain-ken purposes. The fourth-century historian Eusebius described an ancient Jesus statue, the hem of which inferred miraculous powers on plants that touched it:

> [an] image of a man, erect, of the same materials, decently clad in a mantle [*diplois*] and stretching out his hand to the woman. Before her feet and on the same pedestal, there is a certain strange plant growing, which rising as high as the hem of the brazen garment, is a kind of antidote to all kinds of diseases. This statue, they say, is a statue of Jesus Christ, and it has remained even until our times so that we ourselves saw it while tarrying in that city…[155]

This description, and others like it, seems to have inspired the creation of the bronze *Christ the Redeemer* sculpture (ca. 1493, Museo Poldi Pezzoli), although the Eusebius statue is pre-mortem and the bronze one is post-.[156] That sculpture, in turn, might be quoted in a number of subsequent works, including Alvise Vivarini's (d. 1503/05) *Risen Christ* (ca. 1497) (see Fig. 15.34), Vittore Carpaccio's (d. ca. 1525) *St. Augustine in His Study* (1502),[157] Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano's (d. ca. 1517) *Incredulity of St. Thomas* (1504),[158] and Fra Bartolomeo's (1472–1517) *Salvator Mundi* (1516) altarpiece.[159] Neither Vivarini nor Bartolomeo include the dropped hem, and those quotations might be inexact, or imagined by scholars.

Curia, 1723–51), III, col. 934–35. See Brian Curran and Anthony Grafton, "A Fifteenth-Century Site Report on the Vatican Obelisk," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 58 (1995): 234–48; Torgil Magnuson, "The Project of Nicholas V for Rebuilding the Borgo Leonino in Rome," *The Art Bulletin* 36 (1954): 89–115; Manfredo Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance: Princes, Cities, Architects*, trans. Daniel Sherer (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2006), 37–41. There is a translation in Christine Smith and Joseph E. O'Connor, *Building the Kingdom: Giannozzo Manetti on the Material and Spiritual Edifice* (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2007), 400–01.

155 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. C. F. Cruse (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 253. This may have been an extrapolation from Lk 8:43–4. See Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 35–44; Nagel, *Controversy*, 134–40.

156 *Resurrected Christ* (1492–93), Poldi Pezzoli Museum, Milan, https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/christ-the-redeemer/AwFnzLbJkxdJyg

157 Vittore Carpaccio, *St. Augustine in His Study* (1502), Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, Venice, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vittore_carpaccio,_visione_di_sant%27agostino_01.jpg. See Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 35–44.

158 Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano, *Incredulity of St. Thomas* (1504), National Gallery, London, https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/giovanni-battista-cima-da-conegliano-the-incredulity-of-saint-thomas

159 Fra Bartolomeo, *Salvator Mundi* altarpiece (1516), Palazzo Pitti, Florence, https://www.wga.hu/html_m/b/bartolom/fra/christ4e.html

Fig. 15.34 Alvise Vivarini, *Risen Christ* (ca. 1497), San Giovanni, Bragora, photograph by Didier Descouens (2014), Wikimedia, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alvise_Vivarini,_Cristo_risorto,_1497-98.jpg

Artists

Signatures and Individuality

The closest equivalent to our "art" in medieval Europe is *ars*, which had a wide range of referents, including both skills and information. In this period, "art" arose in tandem with plain-ken approaches. Alberti understood painting less as the product of following one's teachers—potentially the fruit of a long chain of authorities—and more as an intellectual penetration to the essential—potentially eternal, deep-ken—rules of the art. This parallels the attitude of the Protestant Reformers to tradition.[160] Painters, like musicians, were about replication of a tradition—and the safety and fidelity that implies—rather than original creation or self-expression.[161]

160 Mose Barasch, *Theories of Art*, 3 vols. (Routledge: New York, 2000), I, 45–46, 121–22.

161 Tatiana Vladyshevskaia, "On the Links Between Music and Icon Painting in Medieval Russia," in *Christianity and the Arts in Russia*, ed. William C. Brumfield and Miloš M. Velimirović (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1991), 14–29 (18).

This is reflected in their signatures, or lack thereof. In contrast, one fourteenth-century manuscript *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* [Mirror of Human Salvation] explicitly omitted the author's name out of humility.[162] Even at the beginning of our period, some Orthodox images had found a way to acknowledge human/secondary authorship without usurping God's prerogative as creator, by preceding the artisan's name with "through the hands of."[163] This was not uncommon globally. In South Asia, images were almost invariably anonymous until the Mughal school produced textual accounts about the paintings and their painters.[164] In Islamic art, humbling qualifiers ("slave", "unaccomplished", "low-born") connote modesty but also suggest (unless forged) an actual signature, given the unlikeliness of attributing authorship and modesty to a third party. An artist's expression of an individual style, or explicit signature, further established an image as an artificial work created at a moment in time, not intended to reflect divine, deep-ken reality.[165]

To be sure, medieval artists sometimes identified themselves in their works.[166] One Russian chalice (gifted in 1449), with St. Veronica, had the inscription "А делал Иван Фомин" [made by Ivan Fomin].[167] In Italy, artists might add a "... me fecit" [... made me] to a crucifix, but this tradition was unexemplified in the north until Jan van Eyck.[168] Antonello da Messina's expressive *Christ Crowned with Thorns*[169] stands behind a parapet on which is illusionistically attached a cartellino reading, *Antonellus de Messina me fecit 1470* (see Fig. 15.35). Vasari relates a story that Michelangelo chiselled his signature (*MICHAELANGELUS BONAROTUS FLORENTINUS FACIEBAT*) into Mary's sash in a fit of pique

162 BnF MS Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Ms-593 réserve, fol. 1r.

163 Constantine Cavarnos, *Orthodox Iconography* (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1977), 65.

164 Som Prakash Verma, "Artists' Signatures in Miniatures of the Mughal School," in Verma, *Interpreting Mughal Painting: Essays on Art, Society, and Culture* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2009), 28–43.

165 However, a signature (or artistic self-awareness) does not necessarily imply the artist has special status, or that he was less pious. See Robin Cormack, *Byzantine Art* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 211; Jeffrey Hamburger, "Seeing and Believing: The Suspicion of Sight and the Authentication of Vision in Late Medieval Art," in *Imagination und Wirklichkeit*, ed. Klaus Krüger and Alessandro Nova (Mainz: von Zabern, 2000), 47–69 (61).

166 Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 16.

167 It is in the Sergiev Posad State History and Art Museum-Preserve, Sergiev Posad, and reproduced at *Veronica Route*, https://veronicaroute.com/1449/10/21/1449-2/ and *The Sergiev-Posad Museum-Preserve*, http://old.museum-sp.ru/Econst_rizn2.html

168 Joseph Leo Koerner, *Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 106.

169 Antonello da Messina, *Christ Crowned with Thorns* (1470), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/435580

upon hearing the *Pietà* misidentified, by visiting Lombards, as the work of "our Gobbo from Milan," the more famous artist Cristoforo Solari (ca. 1460–1527).[170]

Fig. 15.35 Antonello da Messina, *Christ Crowned with Thorns* (1470), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, public domain, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/435580

Throughout the fifteenth century, this sense of the value of the author's skill became increasingly clear in contracts. At the beginning of the century, a contract was more likely to make specific demands about which expensive materials (gold, ultramarine) must be used; an icon painter who has acquired, perhaps as required by a contract, a rare and costly pigment is not likely to disguise its purity by using advanced mixing techniques for subtle effect. At the end of the century, the same kind of concern was shown towards the skill of the painter, now itself valuable—and a savvy client could value it precisely. In fact, the rise of the artist is only half the story here: taste had cycled into a period where opulence was vulgar, and this was compounded by the relative scarcity of gold throughout the century. In our period, a reversal of social values meant that the artist became more famous than his patron; skill outshone money. Colour purity became a casualty of the plain ken's "realistic" palette, which came with a greater appreciation of the artist's skill and innovations of mixing techniques.[171]

170 Vasari, *Lives*, 425.

171 Sandra Baragli, *European Art of the Fifteenth Century* (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2007), 64; Baxandall, *Painting*, 14–15, 23; Kim, Son, and Jeong,

In the late fifteenth century, Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden were both important enough as artists that copies of their works were made.[172] This began a new trend in recognizing the genius of a great artist. One 1510 guidebook to Florence already points out that an angel in Verrocchio's *Baptism* was done by Leonardo.[173] The painter Sebastiano del Piombo (ca. 1485–1547) praised Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* sculpture by asserting that its knees were worth more than Rome.[174] In fact, the contract for Michelangelo's *Pietà* stipulated that it be "the most beautiful marble work that exists today in Rome, and that no master could do it better."[175]

An Italian memorial to Giotto encapsulates some of these broader trends.[176] In 1490, Benedetto da Maiano's (1442–97) marble relief epitaph was erected in the Florence Cathedral to honour the esteemed artist. It showed Giotto assembling a mosaic representation of Jesus's face, the Mandylion. The author of the inscription was Angelo Poliziano (1454–94), but he spoke in Giotto's own voice: the text begins, "I am that one through whom painting, extinct, has revived," and concludes, "what was absent in my art was absent in nature." Unexpectedly, this memorial portrays Giotto not as a painter but as a mosaic maker. This was a deliberate move, especially as the depiction of Giotto appears to be based on a painting of Luke *painting* the virgin. Furthermore, the Jesus icon is the least "authored" icon. Ancient mosaics endured the centuries far better than ancient paintings, and so mosaics were associated with antiquity. Many were evacuated into Italy after 1453. Although mostly medieval, they were read as ancient. Lorenzo de' Medici (1449–92), who owned this Jesus mosaic, was keen to restart that lost mosaic tradition.[177]

"Large-Scale Quantitative Analysis of Painting Arts."

172 Hans Memling's *Donne Triptych* (ca. 1478) has a forged Jan van Eyck signature on its reverse, probably an addition of the eighteenth century, when so much was attributed to van Eyck. Hans Memling, *The Donne Triptych*, oil on oak (ca. 1478), National Gallery, London, http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/hans-memling-the-donne-triptych; Jenny Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck: The Remaking of an Artist for the Modern Age* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 40–41.

173 Kenneth Clark, *Leonardo Da Vinci: An Account of His Development as an Artist* (London: Penguin, 1971), 24.

174 Sebastiano del Piombo to Michelangelo (6 September 1521), in *Il Carteggio di Michelangelo*, ed. Paolo Barocchi and Renzo Ristori, 5 vols. (Florence: Sansoni, 1965–83), II, 313–15. See William E. Wallace, "Michelangelo's *Risen Christ*," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 28 (1997): 1251–80.

175 Printed in Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt, "Michelangelo's Pietà for the Capella del Re di Francia," in *Life and Early Works*, in *Michelangelo, Selected Scholarship in English*, ed. William E. Wallace, 5 vols. (New York: Garland, 1995), I, 245–46.

176 Benedetto da Maiano, Giotto bust and epigraph (1490), Florence Cathedral, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Smf,_busto_e_epigrafe_giotto_by_benedetto_da_maiano.JPG

177 Marco Collareta, "Le 'luci della fiorentina gloria'," *Critica dell'Arte in Toscana* 3 (1991): 136–43; Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 123–34; Alexander

Opposition to Illusionism

Art historians have long appreciated how what we here call plain-ken art implies a spatial and plain-ken logic. Philosopher Etienne Souriau explained that "Every work of art creates its own universe. And whoever speaks of a universe speaks of a whole built upon a space-time net-work."[178] Scholars have been quick to characterize that logic, rhetorically but revealingly, as reality. This understanding applies both to the theory of plain-ken art (rational space as "objective reality") or to its products (Bellini's depictions of events happening in a "well ordered reality").[179]

Over the last century, historians have come to appreciate that perspective is not an absolute, universal truth, but a particularist convention linked to a set of conventions. In 1927, Erwin Panofsky wrote of "perspective as symbolic form." Michael Baxandall notices that Renaissance painting has more straight lines and right angles than seem to exist in nature. Ernest Gilman links the reality most inextricably to illusion:

> The more perfect the representation of reality achieved in a perspective picture, the more perfect is the deception practiced on the viewer. Alberti's window opens onto an *illusion* of *reality*; these two irreconcilable categories are joined in the perspective painting, which thus takes on an intriguing and complex dimension not found in conceptual art.[180]

Inversely, Oskar Wulff and, after him, Pavel Florensky recovered the value of the pre-Renaissance "anti-perspective" and "reverse-perspective."[181]

Nagel, "Authorship and Image-Making in the Monument to Giotto in Florence Cathedral," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 53/54 (2008): 143–51, https://doi.org/10.1086/RESvn1ms25608814. Rembrandt Duits, "Byzantine Icons in the Medici Collection," in *Byzantine Art and Renaissance Europe*, ed. Angeliki Lymberopoulou and Rembrandt Duits (London: Routledge, 2013), 157–84, is dubious of Nagel's claims.

178 Etienne Souriau, "Time in the Plastic Arts," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 7 (1949): 294–307 (294).

179 Bernhard Degenhart and Annegrit Schmitt, *Jacopo Bellini: The Louvre Album of Drawings*, trans. Frank Mecklenburg (New York: George Braziller, 1984), 14; Joost-Gaugier, "Jacopo Bellini's Interest," 23.

180 Ernest B. Gilman, *The Curious Perspective* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1978), 31.

181 Hans Belting, *Florence and Baghdad: Renaissance Art and Arab Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2011), 18, reasonably asks, "How could something be reversed if it hadn't been invented yet?" I see no problem with calling the thirteenth century a microwave-oven-free zone, and would consider it a positive good if there were widespread assumptions that microwave ovens always existed.

This, however, is a late development, an eleventh-hour recovery of lost knowledge. At the time, wise observers knew this, too. Even before the Renaissance doubled down on illusion, medieval skeptics recognized the power of images to deceive, and the necessity of discernment to sort out visions, dreams, and hallucinations. Already with the popularity of the theories of Alhazen (d. ca. 1040) and Vitello (ca. 1230–80/1314) there arose an awareness that perception could deceive depending on the viewer's position.

Fig. 15.36 Domenico Veneziano, *Madonna and Child with Saints* (ca. 1445), Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Domenico_Veneziano_-_The_Madonna_and_Child_with_Saints_-_WGA06428.jpg

Brunelleschi was fascinated by creating illusionistic images, but we should not take him as typical. Linear perspective never totally dominated, because there was always skepticism about illusionism in general, as well as doubt about this or that particular illusion. More purely artistic concerns about compositional balance meant that the laws of perspective were taken as suggestions, more often adapted than adopted rigorously, and perhaps sometimes (especially in the early years) artists simply felt working out a unified perspective was not a good use of their time. Domenico Veneziano's (ca. 1410–61) *Madonna and Child with Saints* (ca. 1445) (see Fig. 15.36) deviates from the Albertan system by moving the vanish point from the line connecting the saints' heads to Mary's groin, contracting the architectural framing around the human figures. Mantegna's *Presentation* abandoned a single vanishing point in order to create a

composition according to "divine" geometry: the angle between Mary's forearm and the bottom of the composition measures a line on the right vertical edge half the length of the bottom edge.[182]

Some painters resisted, in a somewhat Chinese way, the bargain of linear perspective (which the Chinese considered a rip-off), because of its main collateral cost, the requirement of a single viewing point. This requirement created two interrelated collateral mathematical problems: (1) How to find the eye point if you know what the image should look like? (2) How to find what the image should look like if you know the eye point? If you know neither where the artist intended your eye to be nor what the artist intended your eye to see, you have no recourse beyond just experimenting until it "looks right." Artists like Leonardo worried about the probability that their works would usually be seen by observers not perfectly stationed, who would then see only a distortion. Their solution was the inconsistent use of perspective rules, by which the image would look perfect for no viewer standing anywhere. There lingered a sense that the illusionistic images were less real. Donatello complained that the obsessive, mathematical precision of Paolo Uccello's (1397–1475) drawings, like this chalice (see Fig. 15.37), made him "abandon the certain for the uncertain."[183] Symeon of Thessalonica (d. 1429) opposed Western innovations and attempts at verisimilitude: "instead of painted garments and hair, they adorn them with human hair and clothes, which is not the image of hair and of a garment, but the hair and garment of a man, and hence is not an image and a symbol (typos) of the prototype."[184] German satirists mocked painters for modelling saints on family members or on sex workers.[185]

182 Andrea Mantegna, *Presentation in the Temple* (ca. 1455), Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, https://recherche.smb.museum/detail/863431/die-darbringung-christi-im-tempel. See Brigit Blass-Simmen, "One Cartoon—Two Paintings," in *Bellini/Mantegna*, ed. Blass-Simmen, Villa, and Rowley, 35–49 (42–43); Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1990), 9–52; John White, The *Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), 113–21.

183 Vasari, *Lives*, 75; Vasari, *Le vite*, III, 89. See Richard Talbot, "Design and Perspective Construction: Why Is the Chalice the Shape It Is?," in *Nexus VI: Architecture and Mathematics*, ed. Sylvie Duvernoy and Orietta Pedemonte (Turin: Kim Williams, 2006), 121–34.

184 Symeon of Thessalonica, *Contra haereses*, ch. 23, in *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453*, ed. Cyril A. Magno (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 253–54.

185 Thomas Murner, *Die Narrenbeschwörung*, ed. Karl Goedete (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1879), 212; Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg, *Das Evangelibuch* (Strassburg: Grieninger, 1515), fol. 210r.

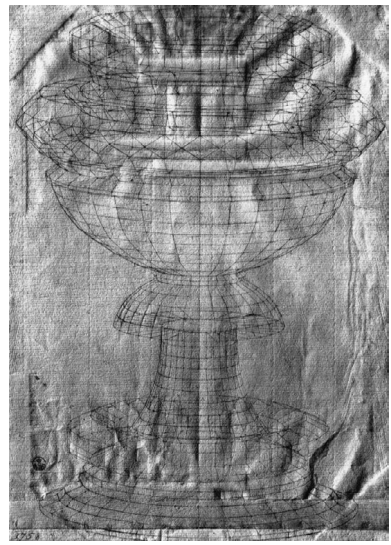

Fig. 15.37 Paolo Uccello, *Perspective Study of a Chalice* (ca. 1430), Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paolo_uccello,_perspective_study.jpg

Some owners opposed illusionism by removing background details, which might have also undermined the artist's authority. One such owner took appropriately illustrated woodcuts and pasted them into a meditation on the life of Jesus; each woodcut's bottom edge was affixed to the top of the page, so that it would have to be flipped up to be seen (and to avoid covering the text).[186] The Augustinian nun Anna Ebin (d. 1485) took a woodcut of the Crucifixion, removed Mary and John—leaving only two of his toes behind—and pasted it into the manuscript she had written about St. Lidwina. She located it as an illustration of the saint's vision of the crucified Baby Jesus, and was apparently not phased by the discrepancy with the age of woodcut's crucified adult Jesus.[187] In Nuremberg, Hartmann Schedel (1440–1514) put Jesus engravings into secular books: A *Noli me tangere* and an *Agony in the Garden* illustrated a horticultural anthology, and a *Jesus Teaching the Doctors* a grammar manual.[188] Schedel's placements served as a kind of reverse secularization, not putting the everyday into Jesus images, but putting Jesus images into the everyday. Perhaps the most complex manipulations were done by the Italian lawyer Jacopo Rubieri

186 Areford, *Viewer and Printed Image*, 85–87.
187 Reproduced in ibid., 73.
188 Ibid., 10–19; Hernad, *Graphiksammlung*, 72.

(1430–after 1500). He blacked out the landscape of a stigmatization. He took a woodcut of saints with a Crucifixion and pasted over it a cut-out Crucifixion, and over *that* a woodcut of Augustine. He pasted a *Last Supper* woodcut to serve as a frontispiece to a text of dry legal protocols, perhaps using the former to admonish the latter. In one *Last Judgment* woodcut, Rubieri removed (blacked out) Mary, John the Baptist, and two angels, perhaps to focus the viewer's attention more narrowly on Jesus.[189]

There was even pushback against the idea of artist as genius. In Nicholas of Cusa's (1401–64) *Idiota de mente* [The Layman on Mind] (ca. 1450), a spoon-maker named Idiota distinguishes his craft from the poets' and the painters': they merely imitate nature, while he, like God, creates something new. This self-consciousness about the human ability to create has been linked to the rise of modernity, although (for reasons not well understood) historically the painters and poets pushed aside the spoon-makers to claim that *they themselves* were the true creators.[190]

Another set of objections to plain-ken art criticized not the illusionism, but the naturalistic immodesty. Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536) objected to "stupid and impious" details in depictions of Jesus in Mary and Martha's house.[191] Domenico Ghirlandaio painted a *Last Supper* fresco (1480, Cenacolo di Ognissanti, Florence), in which Peter points to Jesus with his thumb; later artists would avoid such vulgar gestures.[192] The opposition was deep ken. Drawing from antiquity, Lorenzo Valla (1407–57) explained decor as "a kind of beauty or *pulchritudo* derived from the suitability [*decentia*] of things and persons to both place and time, whether in action or speech. It also applies to virtues, when it is called *decorum*: this refers not so much to virtue itself as to what common opinion considers to be virtuous, beautiful, and fitting…"[193]

The period's most famous voice warning against the incautious use of art was Savonarola's. His reforms dampened the art world. Savonarola's criteria for religious images differed by location: in churches, paintings should be awesome, while in the private home they should be simple, lest they distract. In the latter case, he urged a very personal engagement: One viewing a crucifix

189 All reproduced in Areford, *Viewer and Printed Image*, 123, 125, 132, 136–37, 141–42.

190 Nicholas of Cusa, *Idiota de mente* (*The Layman on Mind*), in *Nicholas of Cusa on Wisdom and Knowledge*, trans. Jasper Hopkins (Minneapolis, MN: Banning, 1996).

191 Erasmus, "Instituio christiani matrimonii," trans. Michael J. Heath, in *Spiritualia and Pastoralia*, ed. John W. O'Malley and Louis A. Perraud, CWE 69, 385.

192 Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Last Supper* (1480), Cenacolo di Ognissanti, Florence. See Heinrich Wölfflin, *Die klassische Kunst: eine Einführung in die italienische Renaissance* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1914), 198.

193 Quoted in Baxandall, *Painting*, 10.

should realize that "God is dead, crucified by me."[194] He opposed the sacrifice of spiritual power for visual, secular illusionism. Botticelli's paintings, as we have seen, may well have been affected by Savonarola's sermons. Commissions declined in 1494, and took almost a decade after his death to recover, a recovery performed by artists like Leonardo and Michelangelo.[195]

Envoi

The motivations for this shift to plain-ken realism are not clear, but we might think about it in terms of its implications.[196] The artist became more socially important, and individually self-important, which suggests the rising spiritual importance given to the self. The pleasure that artists and patrons took in art suggests a move away from asceticism, and the deep-ken power of art.

Perhaps the early goal was not the realistic depiction of reality, but the realistic depiction of staged miracle plays (see Chapter 19). These changes in painting influenced and were influenced by the development of illusionistic details on the stage. In the sacred dramas, a choric *festaiuolo* (typically an angel) stood on stage to connect the audience with what was happening on stage. Some paintings have a similar figure, sometimes an angel, performing a similar role: in Piero della Francesca's *Baptism of Christ*, for example, one angel looks at us while the angel whose shoulder he palms looks at Jesus.[197] In one Nativity play, the shepherds take time to eat a snack on stage, which magnifies not the glory of God but the apparent reality of the shepherds.[198] The fifteenth-century Bishop Abraham of Suzdal, in Florence for the 1439 Council, was impressed by the sacred drama's technologies, from suspended actors to artificial lights. He noted the similarities between these dramas and paintings, in such details as Jesus's disciples lack of shoes in either medium.[199] Certainly, perspective

194 Quoted in Gustave Gruyer, *Les illustrations des écrits de Jérôme Savonarole, publiés en Italie au XVe et au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1879), 204.

195 M. B. Hall, "Savonarola's Preaching and the Patronage of Art," in *Christianity and the Renaissance*, ed. Timothy Verdon and John Henderson (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 1990), 505, 512–13.

196 Perhaps the most sympathetic of scholarly arguments is Lloyd Benjamin's, that the realism was devotional. Lloyd Benjamin "Disguised Symbolism Exposed and the History of Early Netherlandish Painting," *Studies in Iconography* 2 (1976): 11–24.

197 Piero della Francesca, *Baptism of Christ* (1440s), National Gallery, London, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Piero_della_Francesca_-_Baptism_of_Christ_-_WGA17595.jpg. See Baxandall, *Painting*, 72, 75–76; Edgerton, *Mirror*, 18–19; Edgerton, *Renaissance*, 24–25.

198 Alessandro D'Ancona, ed., *Sacre rappresentazioni dei secoli XIV, XV, e XVI*, 3 vols. (Florence: Le Monnier, 1872), I, 197.

199 Alexander Wesselovsky, "Italienische Mysterien in einem russischen Reisebericht des XV Jahrhunderts," *Russische Revue* 10 (1877): 425–41.

techniques had entered the theatre: to demonstrate the perspective technique, Brunelleschi, in 1422, produced in Santa Maria del Carmine in Florence a live-action re-enactment of the Ascension. Careful positioning and use of a pulley harness attached to "Jesus" created an illusion of his ascending up to waiting angels in a "seventh heaven" on a raised stage.[200] Maybe it was an attempt to bring the divine into our secular life. Maybe it reflected flat glass mirrors, only recently available.[201]

When these plain-ken techniques finally developed in the Italian Renaissance, they enjoyed a popularity and authority lasting until the arrival of modern art. This may be a sign of Europe becoming increasingly provincial. It may also be linked to the rise of the plain ken in music, history, and other facets of culture. We can also see that provincial plain-ken inclinations spread beyond Europe. In this period, painters in the Orthodox world were making representations of the Mandylion appear more illusionistic.[202] In Ethiopia, the Kidana Mehrat cave church, on Debre Tsion near Degum, had illusionistic mid-fifteenth-century frescoes: one bay's "dome"—if that's the right word for the ceiling of a carved cave—had a complex ribboned cross and four pendentives to make it look like an actual dome, even when they were not necessary and had no base to rest upon.[203]

The Renaissance shift from the deep to the plain ken resembles more recent shifts with photography and computer-generated images (CGI). One study discovered that soft shadows and surface textures are key in making CGI look photographic ("real"). A turning point came in achieving photorealism when the 1995 movie *Toy Story* roughed up surfaces.[204] Another study found that an eye-level perspective made scenes appear more "realistic."[205] Even the word

200 Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, B. R. 228, fol. 115rv.

201 Edgerton, *Renaissance*, 145; Götz Pochat, *Theater und bildende Kunst im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance in Italien* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1990), 87–92.

202 Alexei Lidov, "The Miracle of Reproduction: The Mandylion and Keramion as a Paradigm of the Sacred Space," in *L'immagine di Cristo dall'acheropita alla mano d'artista*, ed. Christoph L. Frommel and Gerhard Wolf (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2006), 32–33; Giovanni Morello and Gerhard Wolf, *Il Volto di Cristo* (Milan: Electa, 2000), 93–94.

203 María José Friedlander, *Ethiopia's Hidden Treasures* (Addis Ababa: Shama, 2007), 90.

204 Paul Rademacher, Jed Lengyel, Edward Cutrell, and Turner Whitted, "Measuring the Perception of Visual Realism in Images," in *Rendering Techniques*, ed. S. J. Gortler and K. Myszkowski (Vienna: Springer, 2001), 235–47.

205 Cathy Ennis, Christopher Peters, and Carol O'Sullivan, "Perceptual Effects of Scene Context and Viewpoint for Virtual Pedestrian Crowds," *ACM Transactions on Applied Perception* 8 (2011): 1–22, https://doi.org/10.1145/1870076.1870078; Shaojing Fan, Tian-Tsong Ng, Jonathan S. Herberg, Bryan L. Koenig, Cheston Y. -C. Tan, and Rangding Wang, "An Automated Estimator of Image Visual Realism Based on Human Cognition," in *2014 IEEE Conference on Computer Vision and*

"animation" literally means to provide with a soul, resonating with discussions of lifelike Renaissance art.

Beyond the strictly visual, the general atmosphere of the last two decades' highbrow film and television has developed in ways that answer and reward plain-ken expectations. Some naturalistic filmmakers today tend to include "realistic" levels of darkness and background noise, even if it makes action hard to see, and dialogue hard to understand—possibly to the detriment of any deep-ken message. Plain-ken preference for ugliness and limitations parallel the gritty realism of Prestige TV. Critics' and audiences' fascination with the "deeply human" antiheroes of *Breaking Bad* echoes Bartolomeo Facio's praise of the portrait "lacking only a voice" to be alive.[206] The spotlight on change and character development have dethroned the episodic series that reset to a deep-ken stability at the end of every episode.

Over time, linear perspective spread through space and anchored itself more deeply into assumptions about reality, making those assumptions appear objective and absolute. Its development was mirrored in contemporary philosophy, as in the works of Nicholas of Cusa, a correspondent of Alberti (see Chapter 13). There was an initial hesitation in taking it up, and it is not significantly used in scientific or architectural drawings until Leonardo da Vinci. In the sixteenth century, this idea of the superiority of linear perspective spread to France, the Low Countries, and the German-speaking lands, although Dürer still had to go to Bologna to learn the "secret" of perspective. By 1600, it had become a standard tool. Galileo's collaborator Guidobaldo del Monte (1545–1607), in his 1600 *Perspectiuae libri sex* [Six Books on Perspective], did the math to "prove" the convergence rule. By 1700, it had become absolute truth in the Far West, at least among the artistic elite. The use of mathematics reassured theorists that they had found a way to mirror the reality of the world, in a way that reflected the physiological reality of the act of seeing.[207] Just as the deep ken drew from number theory, the plain ken took and gave authority to its own geometry.

The plain ken's assumptions came with a price. Forced to view the subject at a single time, at a single place, we lose the angle of totality. Alberti compares the viewer's perspective to a single glance through an "open window."[208] The Chinese felt the high price made this a foolish bargain; the Italians thought it was

Pattern Recognition, ed. CPVR (Los Alamitos: IEEE Computer Society, 2014), 4201–08, *h*ttps://doi.org/10.1109/CVPR.2014.535

206 Baxandall, "Bartholomaeus," 103.

207 Clark, *Vanities*, 84–85; Edgerton, *Renaissance*, 24; Edgerton, *Mirror*, 6.

208 Alberti, *On Painting*, 39.

worth it.[209] The appearance of engagement has been sacrificed for an appearance of distance. An emphasis on individual components, and the relationships among them, has been sacrificed for an emphasis on the less real spatial relationship they might happen to find themselves in.[210] Four centuries before Alberti wrote of visual rays that "surround the whole surface itself like a cage,"[211] the Chinese theorist Su Shi praised a painter who "has soared above the images" like "an immortal crane released from the cage."[212] The Far West artists came to value cages, and art historians reinforce the cage walls when they describe illusionistic spaces as "plausible" or "believable." The cage may make us feel secure, but it also traps us in a set of limitations. [213]

209 Peter Burke, Luke Clossey, and Felipe Fernández-Armesto, "The Global Renaissance," *Journal of World History* 28 (2017): 8–10, https://doi.org/10.1353/jwh.2017.0000

210 Edgerton, *Renaissance*, 20–21.

211 Alberti, *On Painting*, 28.

212 "摩詰得之於象外,有如仙翮謝籠樊." Bush, *Literati*, 29, 188 (her translation).

213 For example, Dawson W. Carr, *Andrea Mantegna: The Adoration of the Magi* (Los Angeles, CA: Ghetty, 1997), 16, 19, 28, 39.