

ART 202.01
Dr. Brendle
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Midterm Essay: Image #2

This oil painting depicts a scene between the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ as an infant, and a wealthy man with a backdrop of a beautiful landscape. The subject matter is Mary, her infant son, Jesus, and another male figure. He appears to be wealthy due to his clothing and haircut. Behind Mary is an angel who is holding a crown above her head. Beyond the room, two figures stand on the balcony of the structure, which overlooks a beautiful scenic landscape.

The scene depicted in this work is Mary presenting her son, Jesus, to this wealthy man. He looks directly at Christ, while Mary's eyes are focused on something below her eye line, perhaps her son in her lap. The man is interacting with Jesus more so than Mary. However, the angel is not interacting directly with the other figures, other than crowning Mary. The two lone figures are mere bystanders enjoying the view, who could be stand-ins for the artist.

While this work does not have a narrative sequence since nothing depicted follows a Biblical narrative, this piece is allegorical. This man has never physically interacted with Mary or Jesus. This point is furthered by how the rest of the scene is relative to the date of the painting's origin. Despite that, this work does have religious importance because it shows the religious piety this man has for the Christian faith. In addition, there are overt examples of symbolism in this painting. One example is the crown above Mary's head and how she is seen as the Mother of God and Queen of Heaven. Another is the bejeweled crucifix in baby Jesus' hand, which symbolizes the Christian faith and his part in its creation. Another is the pose of Jesus sitting on Mary's lap as an infant, which is a very commonly depicted motif featuring these two figures in artwork.

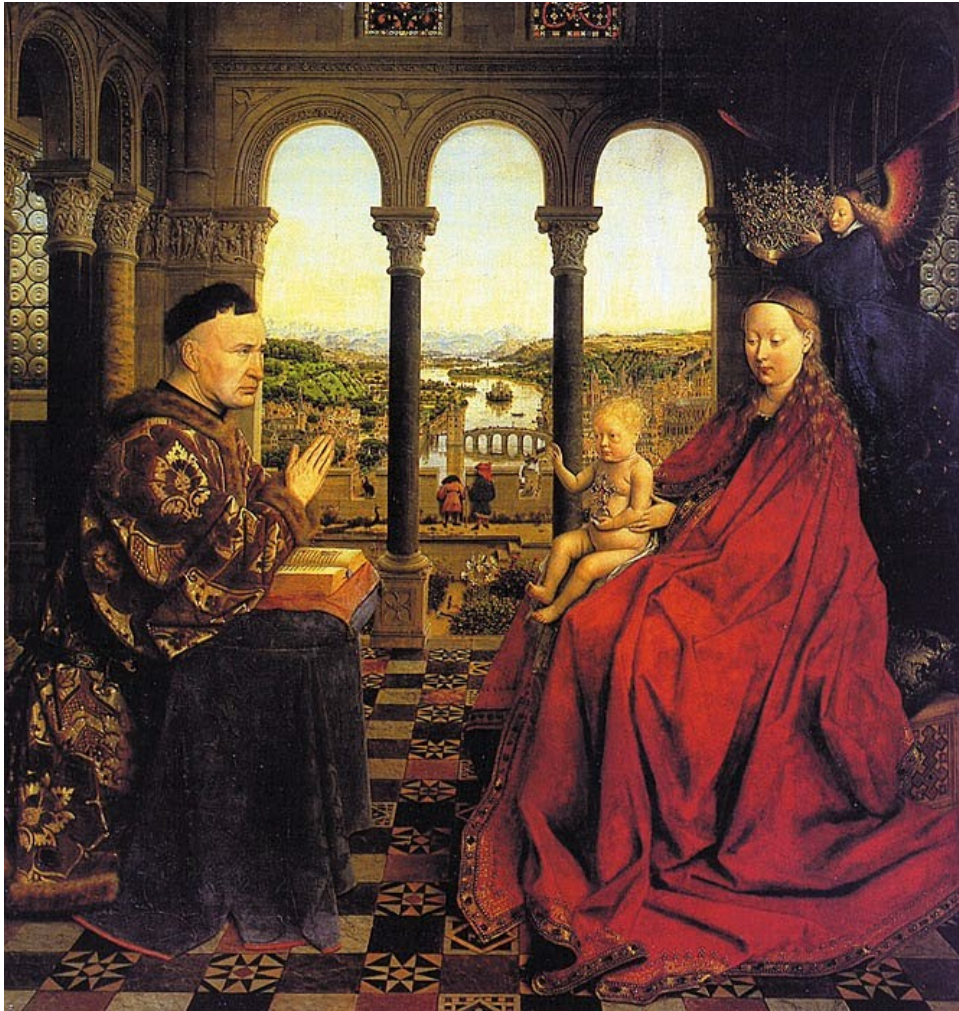
The artist chose to represent their subjects to allow the viewer to understand whom the figures are with little to no background knowledge needed. Mary and infant Jesus are usually depicted together with him sitting on her lap or in her arms. Those of wealth and high standing are dressed in colorful and regal clothing that symbolizes their position in society. The use of value through sfumato creates a sense of naturalism in how light and shadows fall in the space, rather than putting a spotlight on each figure for an idealized effect. However, the wealthy male figure and Jesus are depicted in a more realistic style that shows the artist's understanding of the anatomical form. At the same time, Mary is more idealized, shown through her delicate facial features. The painting has a triangular composition, leaving no negative space in the piece, giving the artwork a sense of harmony and balance.

This piece is a study of proportion because of the differing sizes of human figures: Mary, Jesus, the wealthy man, the angel, and the two lone figures. This proportion ties into the intuitive and atmospheric perspective, making the landscape background appear more realistic. These choices can be attributed to the 15th-century Northern European style and are reminiscent of paintings by Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden.

In comparison with Rogier van der Weyden's "Saint Luke Drawing The Virgin," there are similarities with the visual elements in both paintings. The atmospheric and intuitive perspective with a similar composition creates a significant depth of space in the background. Both paintings feature Mary and Jesus in a relatively modern setting with a male figure who, most likely, has not physically interacted with the two, making the origin of the two paintings allegorical. The modern town in the background and dressing Mary in modern garments create a more relatable scene for the viewer at the

time of the creation of the painting. Furthermore, the S-curve pose of the bodies of the figures sitting aids in creating a triangular composition, which is seen in both pieces.

This oil painting depicts the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ as an infant, and a wealthy man with a backdrop of a beautiful landscape. The subject matter is Mary, her infant son, Jesus, and another male figure. Behind Mary, an angel is holding a crown above her head. Mary presents her son, Jesus, to this wealthy man in this work. It is allegorical because this man never physically interacted with Mary or Jesus, which is furthered by the rest of the scene and how it is more relative to the origin of the painting. Based on the discussion of this painting on its visual and stylistic elements, I think this piece was made in the 15th century in Northern Europe.



Rogier van der Weyden's "Saint Luke Drawing the Virgin"