

## **Comparing Masaccio's Holy Trinity and Jan Van Eyck's Arnolfini Marriage**

In comparing Masaccio's Holy Trinity and Jan Van Eyck's Arnolfini marriage, we are able to analyze many similarities and differences. We notice the innovative Renaissance techniques as well as these two paintings being pivotal pieces not only in these artists careers but also as pioneering artists in history. If we compare these two painting with Gothic art, we observe that these artists techniques have much evolved. These evolved techniques include a focus on naturalism and individualism. These two elements distinguish people in the paintings and are very realistic, unlike gothic art, in which all the people looked the same. The focus on detail, precision, and depth is truly amazing in both Holy Trinity and Arnolfini. The colors in Masaccio's Holy Trinity can help us see the artists intent on creating deep space. Masaccio used red to give the feeling of closeness and blue to give the feeling of this deep space. But the reason for these colors goes beyond precision and for the first time people were dealing with having meaning and ideas behind their paintings rather than just telling a story. Masacios use of blue and red is strategically placed to pull us in to the painting with the blue and push us away with the red. This feeling of push and pulling can also be seen in Von Eycks Arnolfini, in a different way. Van Eyck's piece gives us a general image of the betrothal of a young couple but then proceeds to lure us into the center of the painting, which is the mirror. The mirror with immense detail absorbs the room but also reflects it. The mirror is almost a hole in this room but takes all of what we see with it and transforms it into a refraction. Hence we are pulled into the hole but also pushed back by the reflection.

Another aspect of these two paintings that is important to notice is the different settings of each painting and how they affect the overall feeling and message of the paintings. With Van Eyck the setting is in a domestic house of a merchant. This is the first element to a larger idea that the painting is portraying life on earth in the present moment. This aspect together with the intense and incredible detail of the house almost puts you in the painting. We become a perfect eyewitness, which was a very innovative technique at this time because most paintings, like Masaccio's Holy Trinity were of God and a higher abstract place. Hence Masaccio's Holy Trinity is set in an abstract chapel, which portrays god as the main subject. To me, Masaccio's fame is much more based on the fact that the Holy Trinity was extremely mathematically precise. Masaccio's application of mathematics to his picture and the symmetric balance of the painting represents the research that was valued in paintings during the Renaissance.

The overall feeling of Masaccio's painting is very dark and haunting which is supported by the intense shadows and darkness among with the almost a calm resonance. The composition of the painting also adds to the sad mood of the painting because everything seems very symmetrical and orderly. And when considering the tragic circumstances this organization does not seem right. In Van Eyck's painting we are left with so much when we walk away from the painting. The extent of the detail extends information about things far past the ordinary limits of scrutiny and leaves us almost overwhelmed with the amount. He seems to have focused on everything from the fur on Arnolfini's robe to the twigs on the broom.