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| Artist | Van Eyck |
| Title | The Arnolfini Portrait |
| Date | 1434 |
| Medium | Oil on oak |
| Scale | 82.2 x 60cm – small/medium |
| Scope | Double portrait |
| Style | Renaissance art in Europe |
| Patron | |
| Location | |
| Function | |

Image:



Influence from cultural/social factors:

Situated in their bedroom, as was the fashion in France and Burgundy where guests would be received.

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| Formal features | |
| Composition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Double commemorative portrait of the Lucchese merchant Giovanni Arnolfini and his wife Giovana Cenami -She holds up her dress, not because she is pregnant, but for the contemporary fashion <p>The portrait of them is one of confidence, he has his left hand almost in the position of a saint's. His wife has a calmness to her</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Has been found that he used under drawings to plan out the painting – Can see variations and changes he made while drawing and painting eg. Position of his feet changed. Van Eyck preferred a more closed stance than the original |
| Colour or texture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Complementary colours of her green dress and the red of the bed -Bright colours work to highlight the wealth of the two figures – drapery is brightly coloured -Guest room is displayed in rich tones -The colour green was reserved for those working in banking – both come from a line of wealthy banking families, green on her dress <p>Used multiple layers of thin glaze to obtain his deep and rich colours Working with oils, he had to layer the paint on top of itself many times until he reached the tone he wanted – So the painting is thicker where dark colours are present and thinner in lighter areas</p> |
| Light & tone | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Both direct and indirect lighting used. The light from the window provides the direct light into the scene which can be seen on the shading of the oranges and the reflection on the chandelier + other surfaces -The achievement of light rendered is due to the minimalistic use of oil and shading obtained by layering the paint <p>The light from the window leaves a soft glow over the bedroom</p> |
| Space & depth or relief | <p>Has been suggested that he used atmospheric perspective and pagan astronomy to develop the sophisticated possible vanishing points – in the mirror</p> |
| Line or brushwork | <p>Brushstrokes are almost impossible to see. Used even only one hair on his paintbrush for some areas</p> |

Use or development of materials, techniques & processes:

Van Eyck is credited with achieving innovations in minimalism and his attention to detail. The mirror is unique with the whole scene of the painting being replicated in such a small space – Is thought that he used a magnifying glass

As seen in the shading of the images, Van Eyck took advantage of the drying time – oak took much longer than fresco or tempera. Also blended the colours with the appropriate shading, a technique called wet-in-wet. Layering the paint allowed him to blend the colours and eliminate their borders

Symbolism:

Moralising symbolism of the fruit on the table – innocence

Candles – One is light and one is burnt out. The burnt out one could represent the death of his wife

The dog – Fidelity, or their desire to have a child. Or a simple marking of their status as a dog signifies wealth

The carved statue of St. Margaret, the patron saint of pregnancy and childbirth

Holding of the hands represents a marriage contract

The mirror gives the viewer the most encompassing visual perspective in the painting. There are two figures in the doorway, possibly to represent witnesses for the marriage to make it legal. Around the mirror small scenes of Jesus' passion are shown. On the wife's side are pictures of his death and resurrection are shown. On the husband's only those of Christ's life

Critical text quote:

Stylistic comment and artistic influence:

Ornate Latin signature translates to 'Van Eyck was here 1434' – Similar to modern day graffiti, not accidental, but often inscribed his pictures in a witty way