The Proto-Renaissance
Art of the 13th and 14th Century Italy

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Medieval Times
The Proto-Renaissance in Italy: A Transitional Period

- Medieval Italy was different from the rest of Europe in several important ways:
  - There is trading with those in the France AND the Middle East and beyond
  - The Roman past never completely disappeared
  - Socially there is a merchant class that has money to buy artworks
  - Large urban centers ie cities
  - Intellectually a new idea arises called humanism

Italy ca. 1400
Humanism: The world view of the Renaissance

• Humanism: a philosophy emphasizing the worth of the individual, the rational ability of humankind, the human potential for good, and the beauty in this world.

• How is this seen in the arts? Artists move away from abstraction and towards mimesis.
NICOLA PISANO, Pulpit of the Baptistery, Pisa, Italy, 1259–1260. Marble, 15’ high.

• Located in the major city of Pisa. 15 ft tall in order to grab the attention of the congregation.

• Roman influence shown in layout of figures in panel, as well as re-use of ancient Roman capitals/columns.

• Byzantine and French influence as well.

• This combination of factors is typical of the Proto-Renaissance period.
NICOLA PISANO, Annunciation, Nativity, and Adoration of the Shepherds, relief panel on the baptistery pulpit, Pisa, Italy, 1259–1260. Marble, 2’ 10” x 3’ 9’’.
A comparison of the Pisano sculpture with Roman works—the Pax Panel from the Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace), ca. 13-9 BCE and the Ludovis Battle Sarcophagus, ca. 251.
Andrea Pisano, South Doors of the Baptistery of San Giovanni, 1330-1336. Cast Bronze. Florence
Detail of the Baptism of Christ on the South Door.
Interior of the Cappella Scrovegni (Arena Chapel), Padua, Italy, 1305-1306

Buon Fresco: paintings made on west plaster walls.
Giotto (ca. 1266-1337) has created the illusion of space in his works. He has reintroduced the optical experience in 2D art to the west.

- Human figures that move in space
  - profile views
  - views from behind
  - Individual stances

- Attempts at modeling the figures. Made with volume rather than outlines.

- Attempts at linear perspective create realistic looking 3D space on a 2D surface.
The Lamentation
Giotto, The Last Judgement, Arena Chapel, Padua, Italy, 1304-1306
CIMABUE, *Madonna Enthroned with Angels and Prophets*, from Santa Trinità, Florence, Italy, ca. 1280–1290. Tempera and gold leaf on wood, 12’ 7” x 7’ 4”. Compare with Giotto’s work on the Right.
Duccio is celebrated for his ability to convey expressive human figures and emotions.

- Duccio (like Giotto) is concerned with the depiction of space.
- His space is more lyrical, with curving lines and bodies, complex drapery, and splashes of magnificent color.
- Paints individual figures.
- Saturated colors present in many works.
DUCCIO DI BUONINSENGNA, Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints, principal panel of the Maestà altarpiece, from the Siena Cathedral, Siena, Italy, 1308–1311. Tempera and gold leaf on wood, 7’ x 13’ (center panel). Siena.
Simone Martini and Lippo Memmi, Annunciation from the Sienna Cathedral. Tempera and gold on wood, 1333.
Aerial view of the Campo with the Palazzo Publico, Siena, Italy, 1288–1309.
Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Peaceful City*, detail from Effects of Good Government in the City and in the Country, Sala della Pace, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, Italy, 1338–1339. Fresco.
View of Siena and surrounding countryside from the Campanile of the Siena Cathedral
Renaissance pageantry lives on in Siena ca. 2006
The Palazzo della Signoria (Palazzo Vecchio), begun 1298. Florence.
Florence Cathedral and Baptistery seen from the air. Cathedral begun 1296; exterior completed in the 19th century.
Exterior of the Florence Cathedral taken in between the baptistery and front portal.
Plan of Florence Cathedral and campanile.
Baptistery of San Giovanni. ca. 1060–1150. Florence, Italy
After Lecture 12 you should be able to....

• Identify the influences of early art historical eras on the art of the Proto-Renaissance.

• Describe the role humanism played in 13th and 14th century Italian art.

• Identify the types of media used during the proto-Renaissance.

• Explain the reintroduction of the optical experience in the art of the fourteenth century.

• Describe the material, formal, and technical characteristics of fourteenth-century Italian architecture.