14

Precursors of the Renaissance

Thirteenth-Century Italy

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Italy remained accessible to Byzantine influences, particularly through the eastern port cities of Venice and Ravenna. Around the turn of the thirteenth century, however, developments in Italy, inspired by Roman traditions, led to a major shift in Western European art.

The name given to the period of Italian history from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries is Renaissance—the French word for "rebirth" (*rinascimento* in Italian). Dating the beginning of Renaissance style remains an issue of debate, and some would consider the works in this chapter to be Late Gothic. But the term *Renaissance* denotes a self-conscious revival of interest in ancient Greek and Roman texts and culture, which began in fourteenth-century Italy. Even as early as the late thirteenth century, precursors of the Renaissance begin to appear in the visual arts. Italy was the logical place for such a revival since the model of Rome was part of its own history and territory.

Nicola Pisano

Around 1260 the sculptor Nicola Pisano (active 1258–before 1284) carved a marble **pulpit** for the baptistery in Pisa. The figure of Mary in Pisano's *Nativity* (fig. **14.1**) is a good example of Roman heritage in Italian medieval art. Her monumentality and central position evoke her connections with the earth goddesses of antiquity. Despite the Christian subject, the forms are reminiscent of imperial Roman reliefs. Most clearly related to the Roman past are the draperies, which define the organic movement of figures in space.

Nicola Pisano had been exposed to Classical art at the court of the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II. During the first half of the thirteenth century, Frederick controlled territories in southern Italy, and his patronage brought French and German artists, as well as Italians, to his court at Capua, just north of Naples. Like many rulers before and after him, Frederick used the revival of Classical antiquity for his own political purposes, relating his accomplishments to those of imperial Rome. In Pisa as well, Nicola also had direct contact with Roman sculpture.

14.1 Nicola Pisano, relief including *Annunciation to Mary* at the upper left, *Annunciation to the Shepherds* at the upper right, *Nativity* in the center, and *Washing of the Infant Christ* at the lower center, c. 1260. Marble, approx. 34 in. (86.4 cm) high. Pisa Baptistery.

Training an Artist

In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, artists learned their trade by undertaking a prolonged period of technical training in the shop of a master artist. Young men became apprentices in their early teens either because they had already shown talent or because their families wanted them to be artists. Artists usually came from the artisan class, often from families of artists. Quite a few married into such families and went into business with their in-laws.

Leading art centers in Renaissance Italy.

LITERATURE

Dante: Poet of Heaven and Hell

The Florentine poet Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) wrote *The Divine Comedy*, a long poem divided into three parts: *Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory), and *Paradiso* (Paradise). Dante describes a one-week journey in the year 1300 down through the circles of hell to Satan's realm. From there he climbs up the mountain of purgatory, with its seven terraces, and finally ascends the spheres of heaven.

The Roman poet Virgil, author of *The Aeneid*, guides Dante through hell and purgatory. The very fact that Dante chooses Virgil as his guide is evidence of the growing interest in Roman antiquity. But because Virgil lived in a pre-Christian era, according to Dante he cannot continue past purgatory into paradise. Instead, it is Beatrice, Dante's deceased beloved, who guides him through heaven and presents him to the Virgin Mary.

Long valued for its literary and spiritual qualities, Dante's poem is also important for its insights into medieval and early Renaissance history. In the course of his journey, Dante encounters many historical figures to whom he metes out various punishments or rewards, according to his opinion of them.

The term of apprenticeship varied, but apprentices began learning their trade at the most menial level. They mixed paints, prepared pigments and painting surfaces, and occasionally worked on less important border areas or painted the minor figures of a master's composition. By the time an apprentice was ready to start his own shop, he had a thorough grounding in techniques and media. He would probably also have assimilated elements of his master's style.

Fourteenth-Century Italy

The early fourteenth century in Italy witnessed the development of the humanist movement, which began with a revival of ancient Greek and Latin texts. The rise of humanism reflected, but also significantly extended, the High Gothic interest in nature. Humanists began to establish libraries of Classical as well as Christian texts. Artists began to study the forms of antiquity by observing Roman ruins. And gradually a new synthesis emerged in which nature—including human nature and human form—became the ideal pursued during the Renaissance. Awareness of the Classical revival is reflected in the works of Dante (see Box), Petrarch, and Boccaccio, who discussed art and artists in a new way.

Literacy among the general population increased, and literature dealt more and more with art and the personalities of artists. Another important feature of the Renaissance in Italy was a new attitude to individual fame. Most medieval artists had remained anonymous, but artists of the Renaissance frequently signed their works. The very fact that the names of many more Italian artists of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are documented than were recorded in the Early Christian and medieval periods in Europe attests to the artists' intention to record their identity and to preserve it for posterity.

14.2 Cimabue, *Madonna Enthroned*, c. 1280–90. Tempera on wood, 12 ft. 7 in. × 7 ft. 4 in. (3.84 × 2.24 m). Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy.

Cimabue

Byzantine influence in Italy can be seen in Cimabue's (active 1272–1302) monumental *Madonna Enthroned* (fig. **14.2**). The gold background, the lines of gold in Mary's drapery, and the long, thin figures are characteristic of Byzantine style. The elaborate throne has no visible support at the back but seems instead to rise upward, disregarding the material reality of its weight. As in Byzantine and medieval art, the Christ Child is depicted with the proportions and gestures of an adult. The four prophets at the foot of the throne embody the Old Dispensation as the foundation of the New.

Giotto

The artist who most exemplified, and in large part created, the new style was Giotto di Bondone (c. 1267–1337). He was born in the Mugello Valley near Florence and lived mainly in that city, which was to be the center of the new Renaissance culture. His fame was such that he was summoned throughout Italy, and possibly also to France, on various commissions.

Boccaccio, an ardent admirer of ancient Rome, described Giotto as having brought the art of painting out of medieval darkness into daylight. He compared Giotto to the Greek Classical painter Apelles as a master of illusionism. Petrarch, who was an avid collector of Classical texts and had written extensively about the benefits of nature, owned a painting by Giotto. "The beauty of this painting," wrote Petrarch around 1361, "the ignorant cannot comprehend, but masters of the art marvel at it."[1] Petrarch thus shared Boccaccio's view that Giotto appealed to the intellectually and artistically enlightened. Ignorance, by implication, was associated with the "darkness" of the Middle Ages.

Giotto became the subject of a growing number of anecdotes about artists that were popular from the fourteenth

14.3 Giotto, *Madonna Enthroned* (Ognissanti Madonna), c. 1310. Tempera on wood, 10 ft. 8 in. × 6 ft. 8 in. (3.25 × 2.03 m). Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy. Despite Giotto's fame, few of his works are undisputed. This is the only panel painting unanimously attributed to him. It was commissioned for the Church of Ognissanti (All Saints) in Florence.

century onward. The anecdotal tradition is itself indicative of the Classical revival and derives from accounts of Classical Greek painters who were renowned for their illusionistic skill.

In Dante's *Purgatory,* Giotto and Cimabue are juxtaposed as a lesson in the transience of earthly fame:

> O empty glory of human powers! How short the time its green endures at its peak, if it be not overtaken by crude ages! Cimabue thought to hold the field in painting, and now Giotto has the cry, so that the fame of the former is obscured.[2]

A comparison of Giotto's *Madonna Enthroned* (fig. **14.3**) of c. 1310 with Cimabue's (see fig. **14.2**) illustrates their different approaches to space and to the relationship between space and form. Both pictures are **tempera** on panel (see Box, p. 226) and may have been intended as altarpieces (see Box, p. 226). Each has an elaborate throne (Giotto's with Gothic pointed arches), a Byzantine gold background, and flat, round halos that do not turn with the heads. Whereas Cimabue's throne rises in an unknowable space (there is no floor), Giotto's is on a horizontal support approached by steps. In contrast to Cimabue's long, thin, elegant figures, Giotto's are bulky, with draperies that correspond convincingly to organic form and obey the law of gravity. Giotto has thus created an illusion of three-dimensional space—his figures seem to turn and move as in nature.

Whereas Cimabue uses lines of gold to emphasize folds in drapery, Giotto's folds are rendered by shading. Giotto's V-shaped folds between Mary's knees identify both their solidity and the void between them, while the curving folds above the waist impart a suggestion of *contrapposto* and also direct the viewer's attention to Jesus.

A comparison of the two figures of Jesus reveals at once that Giotto was more interested than Cimabue in the reality of childhood. Cimabue's Jesus retains aspects of the

MEDIA AND TECHNIQUE
Tempera

Examples of tempera painting are found as early as ancient Egypt. From the medieval period through the fifteenth century, however, it was the preferred medium for wooden panel paintings, especially in Italy, lending itself to precise details and clear edges.

For large panels, such as those illustrated in figures **14.2** and **14.3,** elaborate preparations were required before painting could begin. Generally, a carpenter made the panel from poplar, which was glued and braced on the back with strips of wood. He also made and attached the frame. Apprentices then prepared the panel, under the artist's supervision, by sanding the wood until it was smooth. They sealed it with several layers of **size,** a glutinous material used to fill in the pores of the panel and to make a stable surface for later layers. Strips of linen reinforced the wood to prevent warping. The last step in the preparation of the panel was the addition of several layers of **gesso,** a water-based **ground** thickened with chalk and size to help smooth the surface. Once each layer of gesso had dried, the surface was again sanded, smoothed, and scraped. The gesso thus became the support for the work.

At this point, painting could begin. Using a brush, the artist lightly outlined the forms in charcoal and reinforced the outline with ink or incised it with a **stylus.** The decorative gold designs, halos, and gold background were applied next and were polished so they would glow in the dark churches.

Apprentices made paint by grinding to a paste pigments from mineral or vegetable extracts and suspending them in a mixture of water and egg. The artist then applied the paint with small brushes made of animal hair. Once the artist had completed the finishing touches, the painting was left to dry—a year was the recommended time—and then it was varnished.

medieval *homunculus*. He has a small head and thin proportions, and he is not logically supported on Mary's lap. Giotto's Jesus, on the other hand, has chubby proportions and rolls of baby fat around his neck and wrists; he sits firmly on the horizontal surface of Mary's leg. Although Giotto's Christ Child is regal and his right hand is raised in a gesture of blessing, his proportions are more natural than those of Cimabue's Child. It was precisely in the rendition of nature that Giotto seemed to his contemporaries to have surpassed Cimabue and to have revived the forms of antiquity, heralding the emergence of a new generation of artists.

MEDIA AND TECHNIQUE
Altarpieces

An altarpiece is a devotional image (usually a panel painting of tempera on wood), which was originally located behind an altar, visible only to the clergy. After 1215, the priest was moved to the front of the altar, with his back to the congregation. This freed up the rear of the altar for an image. One purpose of the altarpiece was to engage viewers in the sacred drama of the Mass. From the fourteenth century, altarpieces typically had a fixed base (the **predella**), surmounted by one or more large panel paintings. In most cases the large panels contain the more iconic images—such as an enthroned Virgin and Christ, or individual saints—and the predellas contain smaller narrative scenes related to the larger figures. In northern Europe, **wings** (side panels) would usually have been attached with hinges. These wings would then be "closed" when the altarpiece was not on display or being used for a service. In Italy the wings were typically fixed (not movable).

The Arena Chapel

The best-preserved example of Giotto's work is the **fresco** cycle in the Arena Chapel in Padua, located about 25 miles (40 km) southwest of Venice. In the second half of the thirteenth century, under a republican form of government, a group of Paduan lawyers developed an interest in Roman law, which led to an enthusiasm for Classical thought and literature. Roman theater was revived, along with Classical poetry and rhetoric. As the site of an old and distinguished university, Padua was a natural center for the development of humanism, which acknowledged the primacy of individual intellect, character, and talent. Giotto, more than any other artist, transformed these ideals into painting.

The Arena Chapel (named for the old Roman arena adjacent to it) was founded by Enrico Scrovegni, Padua's wealthiest citizen—hence its alternative designation as the Scrovegni Chapel. Having inherited a fortune from his father, Reginaldo Scrovegni (whom Dante had consigned to the seventh circle of hell for usury), Enrico commissioned the chapel and its decoration as an act of atonement. The building itself is a simple barrel-vaulted, rectangular structure, faced on the exterior with brick. The interior is decorated with one of the most remarkable fresco cycles in Western art (fig. **14.4**). Architectural elements are kept to a minimum: the south wall has six windows while the north wall is solid, making it an ideal surface for fresco painting (see Box, p. 228). The west wall, which has one window divided into three lancets, is covered with an enormous *Last Judgment* (see fig. **14.6**).

14.4 Interior view, looking east, Arena Chapel, Padua, c. 1305. At the top of the round chancel arch, there is a tempera panel set into the plaster wall, depicting God the Father enthroned. He summons the angel Gabriel and entrusts him with the Annunciation of Jesus's birth to Mary.

MEDIA AND TECHNIQUE
Fresco

From the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, there was a significant increase in the number of monumental fresco cycles, especially in Italy.

Fresco cycles were typically located on plaster walls in churches, public buildings, or private palaces, and large scaffolds were erected for such projects. First, the wall was covered with a layer of coarse plaster, called the ***arriccio,*** which was rough enough to hold the final layer of plaster. When the first layer had dried, the artist found his bearings by establishing the exact center of the surface to be painted and by locating the vertical and horizontal axes. He blocked out the composition with charcoal and made a brush drawing in red ocher pigment mixed with water. These drawings are called ***sinopie*** (***sinopia*** in the singular) after Sinope, a town on the Black Sea known for the red color of its earth.

Once the artist had completed the *sinopia,* he added the final layer of smooth plaster, or ***intonaco,*** to the walls one patch at a time. The artist applied the colors to the *intonaco* while it was still damp and able to absorb them. Thus, when the plaster dried and hardened, the colors became integrated with it. Each patch was what the artist planned to paint in a single day—hence the term ***giornata,*** the Italian word for a day's work. Because each *giornata* had to be painted in a day, fresco technique encouraged advance planning, speed of execution, broad brushstrokes, and monumental forms. Sometimes small details were added in tempera, and certain colors, such as blue, were applied *secco* (dry). These have been largely lost or turned black by chemical reaction.

On the north and south walls, three levels of rectangular scenes illustrate the lives of Mary, her parents Anna and Joachim, and Jesus. Below the narrative scenes on the north and south walls are Virtues and Vices, disposed according to traditional left-right symbolism. As the viewer enters the chapel, the Virtues are on the right and the Vices on the left. Facing the observer is the chancel arch, containing *Gabriel's Mission* at the top, two other events from Jesus's life (the *Betrayal of Judas* on the left and the *Visitation* on the right), and two illusionistic chapels.

Immediately below *Gabriel's Mission,* separated into two images on either side of the arch, is the *Annunciation.* The setting is a rectangular architectural space with balconies that seem to project outward. Equally illusionistic are the pieces of cloth, which appear to hang on poles attached to the balconies and swing in toward the windows.

Illusion is an important aspect of theater, and in the Arena Chapel the space in which the sacred drama unfolds has been compared to a stage. A comparison of Giotto's *Nativity* (fig. **14.5**) with that of Nicola Pisano on the Pisa pulpit (see fig. **14.1**) illustrates Giotto's reduction of form and content to its dramatic essence. Giotto's fresco combines two rather than four events in a single space—the *Annunciation to the Shepherds* at the right with the *Nativity* at the left. Both artists use simple, massive draperies that outline the human form and monumentalize the figures. But Nicola's composition is more crowded, and the dramatic relationships between figures do not have the power of Giotto's version.

Giotto's shepherds are rendered in back view, riveted to the angel's announcement. In the *Nativity,* the human figures are reduced to four: Mary, Jesus, Joseph, and a midwife. A single foreshortened angel above the shed gazes down at the scene, interrupting the left-to-right flow of the other angels toward the shepherds and focusing the viewer's attention onto the Nativity. Another iconographic play on the gaze appears in the convention of the ox, who sees the important event taking place—a fact emphasized by the prominence of his eye. The ass, on the other hand, fails to see and thus became associated with the unenlightened and the ignorant.

A sculpturesque Joseph dozes in the foreground, withdrawing from the intimate relationship between mother and infant. Giotto accentuates this by the power of a gaze between mother and child that excludes a third party. Nicola's Mary, on the other hand, stares forward while Jesus lies in the manger behind her. Rather than emphasize the dramatic impact of the mother's first view of her son, Nicola monumentalizes Mary as an individual maternal image and, in the *Nativity,* places Jesus in the background.

Chronologically, the last scene in the chapel is the *Last Judgment* (fig. **14.6**), which fulfills the prophecy of Christ's Second Coming. The finality of that event corresponds to its location on the west wall of the Arena Chapel, where it is the last image to confront viewers on their way out. The host of heaven, consisting of military angels, is assembled on either side of the window. Above the angels, two figures roll up the sky and reveal the golden vaults of heaven.

Below the window, Christ is enthroned in a circle of light, surrounded by angels. Seated on a curved horizontal platform on either side of Christ are the twelve apostles. Christ's right hand summons the saved souls, while his left rejects the damned. He inclines his head to the lower left of

14.5 Giotto, *Nativity*, Arena Chapel, Padua, c. 1305. Fresco.

the fresco (his right), where two levels of saved souls rise upward. At the head of the upper group stands the Virgin Mary, who appears in her role as intercessor with Christ on behalf of humanity.

Giotto's hell, conventionally placed below heaven and on Christ's left, is the most medieval aspect of the Arena Chapel frescoes. It is surrounded by flames emanating from the circle around Christ. In contrast to the orderly rows of saved souls, those in hell are disordered—as in the Romanesque example from Conques (see fig. **12.8**). The elaborate visual descriptions of the tortures inflicted on the damned by the blue and red devils, and their contorted poses, are reminiscent of medieval border figures, whether on manuscripts or church sculptures.

The large, blue-gray Satan in the depths of hell is typical of medieval taste for monstrous forms merging with each other. Satan swallows one soul while serpentine creatures that emerge from his ears bite into other souls, an image of oral aggression that appears in many medieval manuscripts. Dragons on either side of Satan's rear also swallow souls, and from the ear of one of the dragons rises a ratlike creature biting into a soul, who falls back in despair. The falling and tumbling figures emphasize the Christian concept of hell as disordered, violent, and located in the lowest realms of the universe.

Directly below Christ, two angels hold the Cross, which divides the lower section of the fresco into the areas populated by the saved and the damned. Giotto's reputation for

14.6 Giotto, *Last Judgment,* Arena Chapel, Padua, c. 1305. Fresco, approx. 33 ft. × 27 ft. ¾ in. (10.1 × 8.4 m).

14.7 Giotto, *Last Judgment* (detail of fig. **14.6**), Arena Chapel, Padua, c. 1305. Enrico Scrovegni, assisted by a monk, lifts up a model of the Arena Chapel and presents it to the Virgin and two other figures. Scrovegni faces the exterior of the entrance wall, the interior of which contains the *Last Judgment*.

humor is exemplified in the little soul behind the Cross who is trying to sneak over to the side of the saved. Toward the bottom of hell, a mitered bishop is approached by a damned soul holding a bag of money, possibly hoping to buy an indulgence. Besides being a criticism of corruption in the Church, this detail may refer to Reginaldo Scrovegni's financial sin, for which his son tried to atone through his patronage of the Arena Chapel. Not surprisingly, Enrico is placed on the side of the saved (fig. **14.7**). Such a portrayal of the donor within a work of art was to become characteristic of the Renaissance. The drapery of the monk assisting him falls onto the ground in soft folds, indicating the weight of the fabric. It appears to fall out of the picture over the actual arch above the door, exemplifying the illusionism for which Giotto was celebrated.

Before leaving the Arena Chapel, we consider the Virtue of *Justice* (fig. **14.8**), which reflects the contemporary humanist concern with government. Two forms of government prevailed in Italy as the Renaissance dawned. Popes and princes ruled the relatively authoritarian states, while republics and communes (preferred by the humanists) were more democratic. Although the latter were, in practice, more often oligarchies (governments controlled by a few aristocrats) than democracies in the modern sense, the concept of a republican government was based on the ancient Roman republic and Athenian *polis* (see Chapter 7).

14.8 Giotto, *Justice*, Arena Chapel, Padua, c. 1305. Fresco. Justice is personified as an enthroned queen in a Gothic architectural setting. She holds a Nike in her right hand, as did Phidias's Athena in the Parthenon *naos* (fig. **7.27**), indicating that justice brings victory. Justice also leads to good government and a well-run state, with all the benefits that this implies. Painted as an imitation relief in the rectangle at the bottom of the picture are images of dancing, travel (men on horseback), and agriculture.

Painting in Siena

The leading early-fourteenth-century artists in Siena, Florence's rival city and a major artistic center, worked in a style that was influenced by Byzantine tradition. Siena was ruled by a group known as the Nine, which was in charge of public commissions. The Nine were particularly devoted to the Virgin and her cult was a significant feature of Sienese culture. She was the city's patron saint; Siena called itself "the Virgin's ancient city" *(vetusta civitas virginis)*.

Duccio's *Rucellai Madonna*

In 1285 the prominent Sienese painter Duccio di Buoninsegna (active 1278–1318) was commissioned to paint an important large altarpiece for a Dominican lay confraternity devoted to the cult of the Virgin (fig. **14.9**). Compared with altarpieces by Cimabue and Giotto (see figs. **14.2** and **14.3**), Duccio's is more three-dimensional than the former but less so than the latter. The throne rests on a solid horizontal, but it rises at the back at an oblique angle, and four of the angels are suspended in a flat gold space. Duccio has emphasized vivid color, an abundance of gold, and elaborate architectural details to enhance the glory of Jesus and his mother. The tension between naturalism and flat patterning is a formal echo of the shift between the material and the spiritual worlds embodied by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. In this painting, as in the Cimabue and the Giotto, Mary is the Queen of Heaven and her son is its future king.

CONNECTIONS

See figure 14.2. Cimabue, *Madonna Enthroned*, c. 1280–90.

See figure 14.3. Giotto, *Madonna Enthroned*, c. 1310.

14.9 Duccio, *Rucellai Madonna*, 1285. Panel, 14 ft. $9\frac{7}{8}$ in. × 9 ft. $6\frac{5}{16}$ in. (4.52 × 2.90 m). Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy.

The *Maestà*

From 1308 to 1311, Duccio worked on a monumental altarpiece for the high altar of Siena Cathedral to honor the Virgin, whose image is the largest in the work. The completed altarpiece was two-sided and originally consisted of more than fifty panels, several of which have been lost. The front exalts the Virgin in her aspect as Queen of Heaven—***maestà*** means "majesty." She occupies the large horizontal panel (fig. **14.10**), the sides of her throne opening up as if to welcome the viewer. In the crowd surrounding Mary appear John the Evangelist and Peter. The other ten apostles are the smaller figures under the round arches.

The influence of Giotto—and of the Roman revival—is evident in the sense that the figures obey the laws of gravity and that shading, rather than gold lines, is used to define form. As with Giotto's monk assisting Enrico Scrovegni in the *Last Judgment,* the draperies of the four saints in the foreground fall illusionistically over the edge of the painted floor. In contrast to Giotto, however, Duccio was drawn to rich color and crowded compositions. His figures are more elegant than Giotto's blocklike sculptural forms.

The iconography of the *Maestà* covers the full range of the Virgin's majesty and of her maternity. She is both the mother of Jesus and the patron of the citizens of Siena. In 1311, when Duccio had completed the *Maestà,* it was carried in a triumphal procession from his studio to the cathedral.

14.10 Duccio, *Maestà,* from Siena Cathedral, 1308–11. Tempera and gold on panel, 7 ft. × 13 ft. 6¼ in. (2.13 × 4.12 m). Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena, Italy.

The *Kiss of Judas*

Duccio and Giotto exemplify two significant currents in early-fourteenth-century Italian painting. Duccio was more closely tied to the Byzantine tradition, whereas Giotto was steeped in the revival of Classical antiquity. This can be seen by comparing their respective versions of the *Kiss of Judas* (figs. **14.11** and **14.12**). Both represent the moment when Judas identifies Jesus to the Romans with a kiss.

In Duccio's panel (fig. **14.11**), Jesus is nearly frontal and Judas leans over in a sweeping curved plane to embrace him. Their heads connect, but Judas's lips do not actually touch Jesus's face. The scene is densely packed with figures, but this is somewhat relieved by the landscape background. The subtle shading of the drapery folds gives the figures a sense of three-dimensional form. Some of the apostles break away from the central crowd and rush off to the right. Their long, curvilinear planes have the quality of a graceful dance movement performed in unison. At the left, Saint Peter also turns from Christ, but, in a rage, he cuts off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest.

14.11 Duccio, *Kiss of Judas*, from the *Maestà*, 1308–11. Tempera on panel. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena, Italy.

Giotto's *Kiss of Judas* (fig. **14.12**) lives up to his reputation among Renaissance authors as having reintroduced naturalism to painting. The fresco is virtually devoid of landscape forms that might distract viewers from the central event. Nor do any of Giotto's figures face the picture plane. They turn freely in space like actors on a stage and are focused on the dramatic confrontation between Jesus and Judas. They, in turn, are locked in each other's gaze, surrounded ominously by the blackened helmets framing their heads. Over Jesus's head, the two hands holding stakes accentuate the rage of the mob against him; none of the stakes is vertical, as in the Duccio; in fact, those behind Jesus seem to radiate like a halo from an unseen point. In this convergence of forms, Giotto signals both the violence of Jesus's death and his ultimate triumph.

14.12 Giotto, *Kiss of Judas,* Arena Chapel, Padua, c. 1305. Fresco.

Ambrogio Lorenzetti and the *Effects of Good Government*

Twenty-seven years after the triumphal procession for Duccio's *Maestà,* the innovative Sienese artist Ambrogio Lorenzetti (active 1319–47) painted *Allegories of Good and Bad Government* for the Palazzo Pubblico (Town Hall) of Siena. Figure **14.13,** like Giotto's *Justice* (see fig. **14.8**), illustrates the effects of good government on a city—in this case Siena. In contrast to the *Maestà,* Ambrogio's *Allegory* is secular, and it reflects the new humanist interest in republican government. He depicts a broad civic panorama with remarkable realism. In the foreground (from left to right), women wearing the latest fashions dance and sing in celebration of the joys of good government; people ride on horseback among the buildings, whose open archways reveal a school, a cobbler's shop, and a tavern; farmers are shown entering the city to sell their produce. On the rooftops in the background, workers carry baskets and lay bricks. In this imagery, Lorenzetti shows that both agricultural prosperity and architectural construction are among the advantages of good government.

Just outside the city walls, people ride off to the country. Below, a group of peasants till the soil, and the cultivated landscape visible in the distance draws the viewer into an almost unprecedented degree of spatial depth. Floating above this tranquil scene, an allegorical figure of Security holds a scroll with an inscription reminding viewers that peace reigns under her aegis. And should one fail to heed the inscription, she provides a pictorial message in the form of a gallows. Swinging from the rope is a criminal executed for violating the laws of good government. Accompanying Ambrogio's vision of prosperity and tranquillity, therefore, is a clear warning of the consequences of social disruption.

Directly behind the left foot of Security, Ambrogio has included the statue of the legendary she-wolf who nursed Romulus and Remus. Projecting from the city's wall, she seems to survey the surrounding countryside. At the same time, the wolf makes explicit the link between ancient Rome and Siena, alluding to the legendary founding of Siena by Senius, the son of Remus.

A series of disasters in Western Europe disrupted the activities of the next generations of fourteenth-century artists. There was famine in 1329, an eclipse followed by a flood in 1333, and a smallpox epidemic in 1335 that killed thousands of children. In the early 1340s, the Bardi and Peruzzi banks failed, and in 1348 bubonic plague—known as the Black Death—devastated Europe. In Florence and Siena, between 50 and 70 percent of the residents died; this resulted in population shifts, economic depression, and radical changes in artistic patronage and style.

As a result of these disasters, artists became drawn to such subjects as the Triumph of Death. Andrea di Cione—known as Orcagna (active c. 1343–68)—painted a monu-

14.13 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Effects of Good Government in the City and the Country*, Sala della Pace, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, 1338–39. Fresco, entire wall 46 ft. (14 m) long. Ambrogio was one of two artist brothers who were active in the first half of the 14th century. Both were born and worked in Siena, and they are believed to have died of the Black Death, since nothing is heard of them after 1348. Ambrogio also worked in Florence, where he was exposed to Giotto's style. The *Allegory of Good Government,* which has considerable documentary value as well as artistic merit, is considered his greatest surviving work.

mental fresco in the church of Santa Croce in Florence in which he combined the theme with depictions of hell and the Last Judgment. Although the work survives only in fragments, its message of impending doom remains clear.

The detail in figure **14.14** shows two cripples and two blind men invoking Death. The anxious gesture of one of the sightless men contrasts with the wide-eyed stares of the cripples, whose hands are needed for their crutches. The inscription reads: "Since prosperity has departed, Death, the medicine of all pain, come and give us our last supper."

14.14 (Above) Andrea Orcagna, detail from the *Triumph of Death*, showing figures invoking Death. 1360s. Fresco. Museo dell'Opera di Santa Croce, Florence, Italy.

Contemporary sermons document the resurgence of religious fervor following the Black Death. In the visual arts there was a revival of certain aspects of the Byzantine style. The increasingly humanistic style of the first half of the century yielded to a more pessimistic view of the world, with greater emphasis on death and damnation. The innovations of Giotto and other early-fourteenth-century artists remained in abeyance; they were revived by the first generation of Italian painters, sculptors, and architects of the fifteenth century.

The International Gothic Style

An entirely different mood characterized works commissioned by the courts in fourteenth-century Italy and France. Their wealth made it possible to import artists from different regions and to pay them well. The resulting convergence of styles, generally known as International Gothic, continued into the fifteenth century; the best fourteenth-century examples were executed under French patronage.

Toward the end of the fourteenth century, France was ruled by Charles V. Two of his brothers—Philip the Bold (1342–1404) and Jean, duc de Berry (1340–1416)—presided over lavish courts, which were enriched by their ambitious patronage. The sumptuousness of the works produced for them shows the degree to which the courts were removed from the real world. In actuality, France and other areas of Europe suffered continual upheaval from the ravages of the Hundred Years' War.

Philip's court was located at Dijon, in the Burgundy region of central France. His wife, Margaret of Flanders (modern Holland, Belgium, and parts of France), provided a link with the North. Reflecting the international character of his court and his patronage, Philip commissioned an architect from Paris and a sculptor from the Netherlands to design a Carthusian monastery—the Chartreuse de Champmol—near his Dijon palace; this building was to house the family tombs. Philip's competition with the king is suggested by the fact that his architect had worked for Charles in Paris, and that the monastery's portal followed Charles's lead in placing portrait sculptures of living people on the door jambs—a site formerly reserved for Old Testament kings, queens, and prophets, and for Christian saints.

Claus Sluter

Philip's sculptor, Claus Sluter (active 1379–1406), placed a figure of the Virgin Mary on the **trumeau** of the portal (fig. **14.15**). She is crowned, but her character is primarily maternal. Although the architectural feature above her is Gothic and Sluter worked in a Gothic tradition, he transformed the representation of human figures. Compared with the door jamb figures at Chartres, Sluter's Virgin turns freely to gaze on her son. She is animated by the sweep of her billowing draperies, and the folds emphasize her spatial flexibility, creating a sense of dynamic energy.

Mary's gaze, focused as it is on Jesus, is repeated by the door jamb figures. Philip (on the left) and Margaret (on the right) kneel in prayer, facing toward the Virgin. They adore the Queen of Heaven as she adores Jesus. Leaning over the noble pair and interceding on their behalf are Saints John the Baptist and Catherine. Sluter contrasts the rhythmic orchestration of deeply carved, elegant drapery curves with the fixed, arrested concentration of the door jamb figures on Mary and Jesus.

14.15 Claus Sluter, portal, Chartreuse de Champmol, Dijon, 1385–93. The sculptor Claus Sluter was born in Haarlem, the Netherlands. After he went to the court of Philip the Bold, he was quickly promoted to the position of *imagier* and *valet de chambre*.

Two years after completing the portal, Sluter began the Well of Moses, a monumental fountain for the Chartreuse (fig. **14.16**). It stands on a hexagonal base with an Old Testament figure on each side. Six small angels on colonnettes between the life-size figures lean over in the compressed space under the edge of the basin. They spread their wings to form an arch over each figure. The Crucifixion was originally represented by a great Cross (now lost) set in stone and carved in imitation of Golgotha. This was supported by the "well," just as the Old Testament was seen as the foundation of the New. Christ was thus the "fountain of life"—the *fons vitae*.

The figure of Moses is a powerful, thoughtful patriarch. His lined face, strong nose, and slight frown give the sculpture a portraitlike quality. But the features are overwhelmed by the swirling energy of the beard and by the stunted horns emerging from his head. These became an iconographic convention in representations of Moses, when his radiance on descending from Sinai with the Tables of the Law was mistranslated as "horned." The Ten Commandments were interpreted as a prefiguration of the new Christian order signified in the great Crucifix over the fountain. And it is to this event that the inscription of Moses's scroll refers: "The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it [the lamb] in the evening" (Exodus 12:6).

14.16 Claus Sluter, Well of Moses, Chartreuse de Champmol, Dijon, begun 1395. Painted stone, interior diameter of basin 23 ft. 6 in. × 23 ft. 7 in. (7.16 × 7.19 m).

14.17 Limbourg brothers, *January,* from the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry,* 1413–16. Illuminated manuscript, 8¾ × 5⁵⁄₁₆ in. (22.2 × 13.5 cm). Musée Condé, Chantilly, France.

The Limbourg Brothers

In northern Europe, manuscript illumination was the primary medium of painting at the turn of the century. The illuminated manuscripts of the Limbourg brothers were among the most impressive works of art produced at the court of Jean, duc de Berry. Jean was an ardent patron who collected jewels and books, tapestries and goldwork, and led a life of immense luxury. The three Limbourg brothers—Paul, Herman, and Jean—came from the Netherlands, first to the Burgundy court and then to Berry. They made **Books of Hours,** which are prayer books organized according to the liturgical calendar. The most famous of these is the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry (Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry)*.

The manuscript page illustrating the month of *January* (fig. **14.17**) shows the day on which gifts were exchanged at the court of Berry. The depiction of precise details is typical of the Limbourg brothers, here concentrating on rich material textures. The duke is seated at a table filled with plates of food, a gold saltcellar at the far right, and a pair of dogs nibbling from the dishes. He wears a fur cap and an elaborate blue-and-gold brocade robe. Behind him is a golden wicker fire screen, and the man in red on the duke's right is inviting visitors to enter. The words "approach, approach" are lettered in gold above his head. On the background tapestry, a battle from the Trojan War is fought by soldiers in medieval armor. The identity of the battle is indicated by lines of verse written across the sky. In the foreground, various courtiers in patterned robes partake of the feast, while a white dog waits eagerly for a morsel of food at the lower right corner. Perhaps the richest area of the page is the red canopy over the fireplace. It contains blue circles decorated with the *fleurs-de-lis* of French royalty, golden foliage, white swans, and two brown bears. Swans and bears were the duke's heraldic devices, and a gold statuette of each surmounts the tips of the saltcellar on the table. In the semicircle above the scene are the zodiac signs that correspond to the time of year.

Such representation of observed detail entered the vocabulary of painting in the course of the fourteenth century. The art of the courts seems to have ignored the effects of the disasters in western Europe during the first half of the century. The International Gothic style persisted into the fifteenth century, but the major innovations in art from 1400 resume the developments introduced by Giotto.

c. 1280 **c. 1420**

PRECURSORS OF THE RENAISSANCE

(14.2)

(14.3)

(14.7)

(14.14)

(14.9)

(14.13)

(14.16)

(14.17)

End of the Crusades (1295)

Palazzo Vecchio in Florence (1299–1301)

Petrarch (1304–1374)

Dante, *Divine Comedy* (1307–1321)

Black Death arrives in Europe (1348)

Boccaccio, *Decameron* (begun 1348)

Peasant Revolt in England (1381)

Medici rise to power in Florence (c. 1400)

Invention of scientific perspective (c. 1400)