

Massacio and gentile da frozi stylistic approaches essay samples

[Art & Culture](#), [Renaissance](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Introduction

Designed relatively in the same period, “ Holy Trinity”, a fresco signed by the Early Italian Renaissance painter Masaccio around 1425 – 1428 and “ Strozzi Altarpiece”, signed by the Italian Gothic painter Gentile da Frozi and created in 1423, depict two biblical scenes with historical relevance, but they have different stylistic approaches.

Body

“ Holy Trinity” fresco shapes an iconographic subject, as it presents the crucifixion of the Christ, who is the central figure in the art piece. Christ is surrounded by Father God at the top, supporting Christ’s cross, by Virgin Mary in the left, looking at the viewers and indicating her son on the cross, Saint John in the right, overwhelmed with piety and meditating at Christ’s death and outside the chapel lie the patrons of the fresco, Domenico Lenzi and his wife, praying in a solemn attitude. The characters are temperate, expressing a grave attitude, as they all assist to a serious, solemn, and tragic moment, mourning and meditating at the death of Christ. Father God seems to be inexpressive, showing his omniscience in the fact that he accepts His son’s death as necessary for the redemption of humans. His attitude is firm and self-reliable. Jesus Christ, the center of the painting, with only one piece of robe covering his body expresses an attitude of dignity, although he is crucified, as if He is aware of the reason of His death, and He accepted it consciously. In the left, His mother, Virgin Mary points her finger to Him, indicating that His son was sacrificed for the salvation of humanity. This is a sign of showing that people should appreciate this gesture, meditate on it

and praise Jesus Christ for his sacrifice. In the right of the crucified Christ, Saint John watches Him, while his arms are joined together for praying and meditating, indicating sorrow, compassion, but also admiration for Jesus. Symmetrically positioned kneeling outside the chapel, Lenzi and his wife are the representatives of humans who piously and gravely praise to Christ, as thanking Him for all humans' salvation.

In terms of attitude and composition, the characters are natural and real, being designed as physically proportionated, manifesting a serious and tragic attitude, as it is the case in mourning ceremonies. Moreover, the body of Christ shows clearly the anatomical description of muscles, bones, flesh, in the context of crucifixion, showing the relaxation and relief of pains. The robes of the other characters predict the lines of their bodies, flowing naturally on the shapes of their bodies. The focus on verisimilar, on real exposure of physical and emotional traits represent indications of Early Renaissance. To sustain the focus on humanity, the architecture is another component that suggests the Early Renaissance. Although the fresco is designed in a vertical space, which is a feature of the Gothic style, "Holy Trinity" contains other elements besides long vertical lines that depict the Gothic architecture, such as circles, suggesting circularity with no beginning and no end, just as God, triangles - indication of trinity and squares, symbolizing the Earth with its four cardinal points: north, south, east, west. The pilasters of the chapel are in Corinthian style, the columns are Ionic and the triumphal arch is Classical, indicating the shift towards Early Renaissance. Moreover, the colors used in the fresco are also indications of naturalism, as blocks of colors are balancing one another and correspond to

the somber moment: dark red and blue cover Father God, Saint John, Lonzi and his wife, while Virgin Mary wears a dark grey robe, a symbol of sufferance. Only Christ wears a white robe, indicating his pure nature. The arch and the tomb are also painted in red, as indications of humanity, but also for balancing the fresco.

“ Holy Trinity” is the first surviving painting that uses the one point perspective structure, as all characters are proportionally, located in an Earthly realm, positioning the holy figures within the chapel and the humans outside, creating the illusion of spatial recession and depth.

Unlike “ Holy Trinity”, whose subject is presented in a single frame, Strozzi Altarpiece “ Adoration of the Magi” is a complex narration, depicting also a historic moment, with biblical connotations, is described in more episodes, narrating the scenes of the biblical moment of the three Magi meeting and greeting the new born Jesus Christ, after seeing and following the guiding star that predicted His birth.

Unlike the “ Holy Trinity”, wherein the patrons of the fresco, Dominico Lonzi and his wife demanded to be inserted in the painting, the patron of “ Adoration of the Magi”, Palla Strozzi, one of the richest men in Europe at that time did not express this desire, but the painting indicates Strozzi’s intention of transferring a part of his wealth to the church because of the expensive artistic representation, considered a manner of giving money to God.

Artistically, the painting is opulent, combining multiple complex scenes that gather humans, animals, nature and architectural elements, joining the Earthly realm of humanity (depicted in the scene where Josef carries Virgin Mary and her new born, Jesus Christ on a donkey to seek for shelter) with

astrology (as the three Magi are guided by a holy star that announces Christ's birth) and with the Holy Realm (described in the scene where the Magi meets baby Christ, giving Him their goods, blessed with Holly auras). While the " Holy Trinity" employs the 3D perspective, the " Adoration of the Magi" is created on 2D, indicating flat forms, and the gold pattern that dominates the whole painting is used for emphasizing the 2D effect. The subject of " Adoration of the Magi" is a happy one, describing the birth and the greeting of Christ, which is a reason for joy for every Christian, and this aspect is presented in the painting as all the figures are serene, calm, joyful, even the horses seem to be smiling. Although the colors of the draperies that the figures wear are natural, having an Early Renaissance sense, the body shapes that they cover does not reflect human anatomy as Masaccio's painting does.

Specific to Gothic style, the figures are portrayed according to their symbolic scale. As such, Virgin Mary is larger than the other characters. Moreover, the painting does not reflect the naturalistic scale of figures aligned to the spatial context, as the foreground figures do not diminish in size, as it would have been naturally. The fact that there are too many figures gathered in the composition suggests sumptuousness and opulence.

However, the light that covers and shines over the entire painting is given by the guiding star and sets a natural setting, modeling hills and figures (aerial perspective) specific to Renaissance. Other elements specific to Renaissance are the detailed animal representations, the costumes and the attitudes of the figures, depicting, just as in " Holy Trinity" a psychological realism.

The painting also incorporates circles, as the symbol of divinity and arches,

as a sign of holy protection. “ Adoration of the Magi” employs empirical perspective, unlike the one point perspective used in “ Holy Trinity”, making Strozzi’s Altar not linear, not unified in space, as it displays distinct images, separated, wherein the central scene shadows the others.

Conclusion

Depicting two historical subjects with religious and biblical connotation, Masaccio’s “ Holy Trinity” and Gentile da Fabriano “ Adoration of the Magi” reflect both two distinct stylistic approaches (as the first focuses on Early Renaissance elements and the second mostly employs Gothic elements) and also different intentions from their patrons. As such, while “ Holy Trinity” is a sign of human piousness, portraying the patrons as praying and mourning Christ’s death, the “ Adoration of Magi” shows sumptuousness, reflecting Strozzi’s intention of transferring his wealth to God and to the church. Both paintings mingle Gothic with Early Renaissance, but there are specific differences, as this essay showed, which positions Masaccio’s painting closer to Early Renaissance than Fabriano’s painting, more loyal to Gothic style.