

My impressions of trompe l'oeil by andrea mantegna

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The paintings on the walls and ceilings of the Camera Picta by Mantegna are frescoes. In his frescoes, Mantegna painted using illusionism, effectively employing depth, aerial perspective, color, etc. In the interior of the Camera Picta, Mantegna decorated the walls with many different paintings. The particular scenes depicted in each painting are still a subject of scholarly debate and may or may not be related to one another. As impressive as these paintings are, I think that the trompe l'oeil (French for "fools the eye") painted on the ceiling of the Duke's bed chamber is even more impressive. In the ceiling painting, Mantegna skillfully integrated painted and real architectural design. The ceiling painting in the Camera Picta room is the very first painting to ever depict the point of view of a ceiling seen from below (in Italian, these types of paintings are called *di sotto in su*, meaning "from below upward"). In the painting, an oculus is created in the ceiling and the ceiling seems to open up to a beautiful, clear, light blue, cloud-filled sky. Putti (cupids) look down at the viewer, creating an interesting twist in roles as the viewer becomes the viewed. The putti are very foreshortened and create an amorous mood in the Room of the Newlyweds. There are also painted spectators who look down at the viewer, smiling. The peacock, seemingly random, holds great significance. It is an attribute of Juno, Jupiter's bride, who oversees lawful marriages. Thus, Mantegna pulled off an impressive artistic feat, using perspective and symbolism.

I am so impressed by Mantegna's paintings, especially his trompe l'oeil painting of the ceiling of the Camera Picta. I think he very effectively used the real and painted architectural structures of the ceiling and the painting, respectively, to enhance the appearance of the ceiling opening up to a

beautiful blue sky. What a nice view to have right above your bed! In this regard, I think that Mantegna's trompe l'oeil really does fool the eye.

What connects me to this painting is my love for the sky. I just imagine lying in bed and being able to look at something like this. It's a freedom. It removes you from being I closed. It's also comforting to feel that though you may be in captive (in some form be it work school or relationships) there is light and there is a way out. This picture is a breath of fresh air for lack of a better phrase and relieves me of feeling boxed in.