

Giotto's *Lamentation*



Arti-Facts

- Date: *Lamentation* is one of 39 paintings executed in 1305
- Medium: Fresco (paint applied to wet plaster on a wall or ceiling)
- Size: approximately 79" x 73" (6 ft. 7 in. x 6 ft. 1 in.)
- Location: Arena (Scrovegni) Chapel, Padua, Italy.

Background

Giotto di Bondone (1267-1337) was a Florentine painter and architect who flourished in the Late Middle Ages and whose artwork paved the way for the humanistic realism of the Renaissance era. He executed 39 extraordinary frescoes for the Arena Chapel in Padua (also known as the Scrovegni Chapel for the family that owned it.) His work on this chapel established him as the preeminent artist of his day. Giotto also worked on the frescoes in the Basilica of St. Francis, in Assisi, where he is buried. Despite his talent, the artist was apparently homely in appearance. The famous medieval writer, Boccaccio, once said "there was no uglier man in Florence" than Giotto! Allegedly, the Star of Bethlehem in Giotto's Nativity fresco was modeled on Halley's Comet, which he saw with his own eyes in 1301.

What to Look For

Emotion - Perhaps the most dominant feature of Giotto's characters (both human and angelic) is the emotion they express with their facial features and gestures. Notice especially the ten angels who "fly" above the scene, each expressing a different emotion for the loss of their Lord.

Garments - Giotto's figures break out of the two-dimensional stiffness of Byzantine art with garments that exhibit soft folds, shading, bright colors, and conformity to bodily contours.

Rock - A diagonal rock ledge leads from top right to lower left culminating in the weeping Madonna's embrace of her Son.

Faces and Eyes - The figures in Giotto's paintings have an oriental appearance to them, reflective of the earlier, eastern influence of icon painting.

Blues - The blue hues of the Virgin's robe and sky seem to be discolored after seven centuries. This was due to the degradation of the blue pigmentation that could only be applied on the surface after the frescoes dried and which did not withstand the ravages of time.