

TITLE: Annunciation Triptych (Merode Altarpiece) **LOCATION:** Workshop of Robert Campin Made in Tournai, South Netherlands **DATE:** 1427-1432

ARTIST: Robert Campin (AKA The Master of Flemalle) **PERIOD/STYLE:** 15th Century Northern Renaissance **PATRON:** Peter Inghelbrecht and Margarete Scrynmakers

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Oil on oak

FORM:

The Merode Altarpiece is a triptych. It is made of three panels.

FUNCTION:

A donor portrait that doubles as a household devotional object. The owners would have purchased the triptych to use in private prayer. An image of Christ's conception in an interior not unlike the one in which they lived also may have reinforced their hope for their own children.

CONTENT:

The integration of religious and secular concerns are illustrated in this triptych. The biblical scene of the Annunciation from Isaiah 7:14 is taking place inside a contemporary Flemish household. The objects in the scene are more than just decorative. They also represent religious symbols of the virgin's purity and divine mission. The tools that Joseph is working with represent the Passion of Christ, the lilies symbolize Mary's virginity, and that the smoking candle which has just gone out tells us that this is the moment (the Annunciation) when God takes human form and his exclusively divine nature is gone. The water jug in the background represents the "vessel most clean" or, Mary. The ax refers to the "ax laid into the root of the trees", which refers to the fate of sinners. The rod refers to Joseph's flowering rod that won him the hand of Mary in marriage. The Saw refers to Isaiah's martyrdom.

CONTEXT:

Religion was such an integral part of Flemish life that separating the sacred from the secular was impossible--and undesirable. The presentation in religious art of familiar settings and objects no doubt strengthened the direct bond that the patron or viewer felt with the biblical figures. In the Netherlands as well as in Florence, new developments in art began about 1420. But what was called the Northern Renaissance was not a rebirth in the Italian sense, Artists in the Netherlands, modern Belgium (then called Flanders) and Holland, lacked Roman ruins to rediscover. Still, their break from the Gothic style produced a flowering of the arts.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

This triptych is an example of oil painting that was still new to European painting. The Altarpiece was painted in a Byzantine tradition. This early style, which was very popular at that time and age, was primarily used for Christian holy art. The art form was less concerned with perspective as more with getting the message across. More abstract and primarily more focused on symbolism. While the Italians looked to Classical antiquity for inspiration, northern Europeans looked to nature. Without Classical sculpture to teach them ideal proportions, they painted reality exactly the way it appeared, in a detailed, realistic style. This explains the lack of haloes. Reflecting perhaps the teachings of the Franciscan Order, whose monks took care to interpret the Bible in terms that their listeners understood and could relate to, an approach which was especially popular in Northern Europe, Campin amplifies the domestic nature of the scene and keeps religious conventions and formalities to a minimum. This, no haloes.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

The patrons are revealed kneeling in the garden as witnesses to this holy event. Stylistic and technical evidence suggests that the altarpiece was executed in phases. The Annunciation, which follows a slightly earlier workshop composition, probably was not commissioned. Shortly thereafter, the male donor ordered the wings, which appear to have been painted by two artists. At a later point, in the 1430s, presumably following the donor's marriage, the portraits of his wife and of the messenger were added. The windows of the central panel, originally covered with gold leaf, were painted with a blue sky, and the armorial shields were added afterward.

INTERPRETATION:

Having just entered the room, the angel Gabriel is about to tell the Virgin Mary that she will be the mother of Jesus. The golden rays pouring in through the left oculus carry a miniature figure with a cross. On the right wing, Joseph, who is betrothed to the Virgin, works in his carpenter's shop, drilling holes in a board. The mousetraps on the bench and in the shop window opening onto the street are thought to allude to references in the writings of Saint Augustine identifying the cross as the devil's mousetrap. On the left wing, the kneeling donor appears to witness the central scene through the open door. His wife kneels behind him, and a town messenger stands at the garden gate. The tiny figure flying in from the window, unseen by the Virgin Mary is a symbol of incarnation and foreshadowing of what lies ahead for the future Mother of God and her son. The Mousetrap in the right panel is a symbol of Christ as a metaphor for a trap for Satan. The flowers, basin, towel and candles are all symbols of Mary's attributes like purity and humility.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

The name Inghelbrecht means "Angel Bringer", so it is likely that the patrons were involved in the selection of the subject matter. The name Merode comes from the wealthy family that owned this piece during the 19th century.

TITLE: Arnolfini Portrait **LOCATION:** The Netherlands **DATE:** 1434

ARTIST: Jan Van Eyck **PERIOD/STYLE:** Northern European Renaissance **PATRON:** Giovanni Arnolfini

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: oil on wood

FORM:

Here the use of bright colors works to highlight the wealth of the two figures. Their drapery is brightly colored and their guest room is displayed in rich tones. The color green in Italy was reserved for those involved in banking. Depicting the woman in green had to represent that she was from the high business or merchant class. In this painting van Eyck uses both direct and indirect light. The light from the window provides the direct light into the scene which can be seen on the shading of the oranges and the reflection on the chandelier and other surfaces. The achievement of light rendered in this painting, again, is largely due to the minimalistic use of oil and degree of shading obtained by layering the paint.

FUNCTION:

The painting, among the other things argued, highlights the merchant's wealth. Jan was probably commissioned by the merchant through the Duke. It is also possible that the painting could have been commissioned by Signor Cenami, father of the bride, to have proof.

CONTENT:

This piece features a man and woman standing in the main sitting room of their home. They are surrounded by symbolic images that represent not only the wealth but piety of the figures. In 1990 a document came to light that certified the wedding of Giovanni Arnolfini and Giovanna Cenami occurred in 1447, 13 years after the portrait was painted and six years after the artist had died. A memorial for a dead wife • A gift for the Arnolfini that had the purpose of showing their wealth • That the painting shows a betrothal and not a marriage • Grant of legal authority from husband to wife to conduct business in his name • To show Giovanni's good character, possibly to promote business relations • The signature on the back wall is a legal document of a marriage • That none of the symbols have any deeper meaning • It is only a double portrait and nothing else

CONTEXT:

For almost a thousand years Europe lay in the dark ages under a feudal society without any significant advancement. Sometime in the 14th Century Europe serfs were living as free men, the printing press was invented, commerce was taking off and new ideas arose. With mobility, the rise of the merchant class led to an increase in ideas, philosophy, artistic advancements and scientific innovations. Old religious ideas were beginning to change again, especially in the north which would be home to the Reformation. In Italy the Renaissance in architecture and sculpture had already taken off with the innovations made by Donatello and Brunelleschi. Insights in perspective and mathematics taken from the classics were being to show humanity in a new light. The Renaissance would take hold across both sides of Europe, although fundamentally in different manners. Later, ideas from the north and south would mix and spur along further advancement.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The artist is credited with achieving innovations in minimalism and his attention to detail is uncanny. The mirror in the back of the painting is unique in that the whole scene is replicated in the small mirror. It is thought that van Eyck used a magnifying glass.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

As seen in the shading of the images, van Eyck took advantage of the drying time, much longer than that of tempera or fresco, and blended the colors with the appropriate shading, a technique called wet-in-wet. Layering the paint allowed the artist to blend the colors and eliminate their borders.

INTERPRETATION:

This is either an undocumented first wife of Giovanni di Arrigo or a second wife of Giovanni di Nicolao, or, according to a recent proposal, Giovanni di Nicolao's first wife Costanza Trenta, who had died perhaps in childbirth by February 1433. In the latter case, this would make the painting partly an unusual memorial portrait, showing one living and one dead person. Details such as the snuffed candle above the woman, the scenes after Christ's death on her side of the background roundel, and the black garb of the man, support this view

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Van Eyck's brush strokes are almost impossible to see in his small and medium-sized work. It has been argued that perhaps his paintbrushes consisted only of one hair. Arnolfini was a representative of the Medici bank living in Bruges and a counselor to the counselor to the Duke of Burgundy.

TITLE: Adam and Eve (AKA Fall of Man) **LOCATION:** Germany **DATE:** 1504

ARTIST: Albrecht Durer **PERIOD/STYLE:** Engraving **PATRON:**

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:

FORM:

In the picture, Adam and Eve stand together in a dense, dark forest. Far from the garden evoked in Genesis, this forest is distinctly German, the dark woods of the devils and spooks of Grimm's fairy tales. Foreign and unexpected motifs intrude into this German wood. Despite the chill of the forest, the two human figures appear nude. Their bodies are frontal, and they stand in a classical contrapposto.

FUNCTION:

The poses of the two human figures are contrived to show off this German artist's knowledge of classical (Greco-Roman) proportions. Based on the ideals of the Roman architect Vitruvius, the proportions of the face—for instance the distance from forehead to chin—determine the ideal proportions of the rest of the body. Dürer sacrifices naturalism to showcase his mastery of Vitruvian ideals. This work is considered an early Durer masterpiece, and was intended for mass production.

CONTENT:

This twisting configuration of head and body is distinctly artificial. The naturalizing contrapposto clashing with the artificiality of the rest of the pose establishes a pattern of contradictions that run throughout the picture. A seemingly astutely observed tree becomes distinctly odd, as we recognize that Eve is plucking an apple from a tree with fig leaves. A parrot, a tropical bird, perches on a branch to the viewer's left. Six other animals stroll disinterestedly through or stand about—an elk, ox, cat, rabbit, mouse, and goat. The cartellino or small sign hanging from branch Adam grasps contains its own contradiction. It proudly identifies the artist as a citizen of the Franconian city of Nuremberg (Noricus), but does so in Latin, the language of the Mediterranean, of the Roman Empire and of the Italian Renaissance.

CONTEXT:

The two figures are inspired by statues of Medici Venus and Apollo Belvedere, and based on Vitruvian ideals for human proportion. Durer was the most famous Northern European artist of his era and he traveled extensively and became fascinated with the classical ideas of the Southern Italian renaissance. Durer was among the first Northern artists to travel to Italy expressly to study Italian art and its underlying theories.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Pictures made in multiples, such as the Adam and Eve engraving, meant that the ideas and designs of a German artist could be known in other regions and countries by large numbers of people. German artists could learn about classical art without traveling to Italy. After his trips to Venice and his encounter with the Italian Renaissance, Dürer embraced the ideals of the Renaissance that he experienced first hand while continuing to celebrate his German heritage. Dürer was to master painting and surpass all others in printmaking, both relief and intaglio. Ultimately he would rely on his prints for profit and recognition. Dürer not only experienced the transformation from Gothic to Renaissance, he was an agent of that change.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

The print allows Dürer to express his personal and cultural concerns. Proud of his German identity (Albert Durer Noricus or "Albert Dürer of Nuremberg"), the artist is nonetheless enthralled by Italian and classical tradition. The German forest is ennobled by classically proportioned figures who actually reference Greek sculptures of Venus and Apollo, and anchored in tradition with the symbolism of the humors. In Renaissance fashion, the perfect physical proportions of the body correlate with the interior harmony of the humors.

INTERPRETATION:

Colorful, tropical parrots were collectors items in Germany, and they were also symbols in art. The call of the parrot was believed to sound like "Eva-Ave" —Eve and Ave Maria ("Hail Mary"—the name of a prayer in honor of the Virgin Mary). This word play underpins the Christian interpretation of the story of the Fall of Humanity by characterizing the Virgin Mary, mother of Christ, as the antidote for Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden. The other animals bear other symbolic meanings. The elk, ox, rabbit, and cat exemplify the four humors or human personality types, all of which correlate with specific fluids in the body. Melancholic: Elk, Phlegmatic: Ox, Sanguine: Rabbit, and Choleric: Cat. Mouse=Satan, Parrot=Cleverness

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Durer was the first artist in history to file a copyright claim. Hippocrates wrote the theories of the four humors, based on the theory that the body functions and fluids had to do with human temperament. Marsilio Ficino wrote the treatise "De Vita Triplici" in 1489 which separates artists from the Hippocratic theory as "Saturnine", because they are melancholic, eccentric and prone to creative frenzy and have an excess of Black bile, a sign of being born under the sign of the planet Saturn.

TITLE: Isenheim altarpiece **LOCATION:** Germany (Colmar is now part of France) **DATE:** 1512-1516

ARTIST: Matthais Grunewald and Nicolas of Hagenau **PERIOD/STYLE:** Northern European Renaissance **PATRON:** The Brothers of Saint Anthony order

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Oil on wood

FORM:

At the heart of the altarpiece, Nicolas of Hagenau's central carved and gilded ensemble consists of rather staid, solid and unimaginative representations of three saints important to the Antonine order; a bearded and enthroned St. Anthony flanked by standing figures of St. Jerome and St. Augustine. Below, in the carved predella, usually covered by a painted panel, a carved Christ stands at the center of seated apostles, six to each side, grouped in separate groups of three. Hagenau's interior ensemble is therefore symmetrical, rational, mathematical and replete with numerical perfections—one, three, four and twelve.

FUNCTION:

Constructed and painted between 1512 and 1516, the enormous moveable altarpiece, essentially a box of statues covered by folding wings, was created to serve as the central object of devotion in an Isenheim hospital built by the Brothers of St. Anthony. The emphatic physical suffering was intended to be thaumaturgic (miracle performing), a point of identification for the denizens of the hospital. The flanking panels depict St. Sebastian, long known as a plague saint because of his body pocked by arrows, and St. Anthony Abbot.

CONTENT:

The painted panels fold out to reveal three distinct ensembles. In its common, closed position the central panels close to depict a horrific, night-time Crucifixion. In the predella panel is a Lamentation, the sprawling and horrifyingly punctured dead body of Christ is presented as an invitation to contemplate mortality and resurrection. The second position emphasizes this promise of resurrection. Its panels depict the Annunciation, the Virgin and Child with a host of musical angels, and the Resurrection. The progression from left to right is a highlight reel of Christ's life. The Resurrection panel is the strangest of these inner visions. Christ is wreathed in orange, red and yellow body haloes and rises like a streaking fireball, hovering over the sepulchre and the bodies of the sleeping soldiers, a combination of Transfiguration, Resurrection and Ascension. In the final panel, Grunewald lets his imagination run riot in the depiction of St. Anthony's temptations in the desert; sublime hybrid demons, like Daliesque dreams, torment Anthony's waking and sleeping hours, bringing to life the saint's torment and mirroring the physical and psychic suffering of the hospital patients.

CONTEXT:

At the Isenheim hospital, the Antonine monks devoted themselves to the care of sick and dying peasants, many of them suffering from the effects of ergotism, a disease caused by consuming rye grain infected with fungus. Ergotism, popularly known as St. Anthony's fire, caused hallucinations, skin infection and attacked the central nervous system, eventually leading to death. It is perhaps not incidental to Grunewald's vision for his altarpiece that the hallucinogen LSD was eventually isolated from the same strain of fungus. Grunewald painted the Isenheim altarpiece in the years just before the Protestant Reformation shook Catholicism to its core. Despite the anti-Church dissent spreading across Europe, northern European artists like Grunewald still glorified Catholic subject matter.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Grunewald's mastery of medieval monstrosity echoes and evokes Hieronymus Bosch and has inspired artists ever since. The entire altarpiece is a paean to human suffering and an essay on faith and the hope for heaven in the troubled years before the Reformation. In fact, Grunewald was a leader for many German expressionists in the 20th century. Even though most other German expressionists weren't focusing on religious subjects at the time, they were still inspired by Grunewald's evocative style. It helped them approach and depict the horrors of WWI.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

INTERPRETATION:

The Virgin swoons into the waiting arms of the young St. John the Evangelist while John the Baptist, on the other side (not commonly depicted at the Crucifixion), gestures towards the suffering body at the center and holds a scroll which reads "he must increase, but I must decrease."

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

The pig who usually accompanies St. Anthony in art is a reference to the use of pork fat to heal skin infections, but it also led to Anthony's adoption as a patron saint of swineherds, totally unrelated to his reputation for healing and as the patron of basket-weavers, brush-makers and gravediggers (he first lived as an anchorite, a type of religious hermit, in an empty sepulchre)

TITLE: Allegory of Law and Grace **LOCATION:** Germany **DATE:** 1530

AKA Law and Gospel

ARTIST: Lucas Cranach the Elder, **PERIOD/STYLE:** Northern European Renaissance **PATRON:** Possibly Martin Luther

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Woodcut and letterpress

FORM:

The Allegory of Law and Grace has two sides, with a tree dividing the page to delineate the themes of "Law" on the left and themes of "Grace" on the right. On the left, the tree appears dry and leafless, with Adam and Eve standing in the background. A naked man runs across the scene, prodded by a sharp poker wielded by a crazed skeleton (death) and the devil. Meanwhile, Moses stands in the corner under the tree, holding the Ten Commandments as other prophets stand behind him. Jesus can be seen floating on a cloud in the skies, passing judgment.

FUNCTION:

The function of this print was to promote the Protestant ideology to the public. It is a metaphor for the Law of the old Testament versus the Grace of the New Gospel. Martin Luther, guerrilla leader of the Protestant Reformation and his own brand of Christian practice known as Lutheranism, wanted religious devotees to have access to images alongside texts like the Bible. These images helped people have a connection with God without meddling middlemen (those would be the priests), against whom Luther really rallied despite having been one himself.

CONTENT:

In The Law and the Gospel (below), two nude male figures appear on either side of a tree that is green and living on the "Gospel" side to the viewer's right, but barren and dying on the "law" side to the viewer's left. Six columns of Bible citations appear at the bottom of the panel. On the "gospel" side of the image (the right side), John the Baptist directs a naked man to both Christ on the cross in front of the tomb and to the risen Christ who appears on top of the tomb (see detail at top of page). The risen Christ stands triumphant above the empty tomb, acting out the miracle of the Resurrection. This nude figure is not vainly hoping to follow the law or to present a tally of his good deeds on the judgment day. He stands passively, stripped down to his soul, submitting to God's mercy. In the left foreground a skeleton and a demon force a frightened naked man into hell, as a group of prophets, including Moses, point to the tablets of the law. The motifs on the left side of the composition are meant to exemplify the idea that law alone, without gospel, can never get you to heaven. Christ sits in Judgment as Adam and Eve (in the background) eat the fruit and fall from grace. Moses beholds these events from his vantage point toward the center of the picture, his white tablets standing out against the saturated orange robe and the deep green tree behind him, literally highlighting the association of law, death, and damnation.

CONTEXT:

In Law and Gospel, a woodcut dates about 12 years after Luther set the Reformation in motion with his 95 Theses, Lucas Cranach the Elder gave visual expression to the doctrinal differences between Protestantism and Catholicism. Cranach contrasted Catholicism (based on Old Testament law according to Luther) and Protestantism (based on the Gospel belief in God's grace.) in two images separated by a centrally placed tree that has leafy branches on the Protestant side. On the left half, judgment day has arrived, as represented by Christ's appearance at the top of the scene. In contrast to this Catholic reliance on good works and clean living, Protestant doctrine emphasized God's grace as the source of redemption. Accordingly, God showers the sinner in the right half of the print with grace, as streams of blood flow from the crucified Christ. At the far left are Adam and Eve, whose original sin necessitates Christ's sacrifice. In the lower right corner of the woodcut, Christ emerges from the tomb and promises salvation to all who believe in him.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The Law and the Gospel is the single most influential image of the Lutheran Reformation. The Reformation, initiated by Martin Luther in 1517, was originally an attempt to reform the Catholic Church. Cranach is now known as the "painter of the Reformation". He was close friends with Martin Luther. He was an accomplished graphic artist who used the new, inexpensive medium of prints on paper to promote Lutheran ideology. If people had access to a Bible written in a comprehensible language and with comprehensible pictures like Cranach's, then the need for priests would simply go away and so would all the power and hierarchy of the Church. As a result, Luther began translating the Bible into German so that Germans could read it. His German Bible included a number of pictures, which helped to best express his message. To spread the word of the Protestant cause, he also wrote a number of pamphlets that could be distributed to the public. These also had pictures.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

In consultation with Martin Luther, Lucas Cranach the Elder produced The Law and the Gospel (below). All of Cranach's Lutheran painting rests upon this pictorial type, which also influenced other artists. The Law and the Gospel explains Luther's ideas in visual form, most basically the notion that heaven is reached through faith and God's grace. Luther despised and rejected the Catholic idea that good deeds, what he called "good works," could play any role in salvation.

INTERPRETATION:

As Reformation scholar Bernhard Lohse explains: The Word of God encounters people as law and as gospel, as a word of judgment and as a word of grace.... It is certainly true that there is more law than gospel in the Old Testament and more gospel than law in the New Testament. Luther's distinction between law and gospel, however, referred to something other than the division of biblical statements into the two parts of the biblical canon. This distinction rather describes the fact that God both judges and is merciful. This is an interpretation of "Law" or the Old Testament, which was all about judgment and hellfire. The right side, in contrast, depicts the Gospel, or the New Testament, which is much more hopeful and a lot less scary. For one thing, the tree isn't dry and leafless; it is in fully leafy bloom. Christ can be seen on the cross, conquering sin and the devil (literally squished under the foot of the cross), while the naked man who was once chased with a hot poker is shown the righteous way by John the Baptist as the light of the Holy Spirit (the dove) shines down. It's truly a majestic scene.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

The painting interprets the roles of law, good works, faith, and grace in the human relationship to God.

TITLE: Hunters in the Snow **LOCATION:** Flanders **DATE:** 1565

ARTIST: Pieter Breugel the Elder **PERIOD/STYLE:** Northern European Renaissance **PATRON:** Niclaes Jongelinck

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Oil on wood panel

FORM:

The painting, usually interpreted as a genre scene (an image of daily life), features a snow-covered landscape that recedes dramatically to a row of jagged mountains in the distance, all under a blue-grey sky. In the lower left corner a trio of hunters and their pack of dogs return from a hunt. Beside them is an inn, and its rust-colored bricks and the bright yellow fire in front of it are a striking contrast to the whites and grays and ashy blues that dominate the painting.

FUNCTION:

Inspired by the tradition of the medieval “Book of hours”, this series of panel paintings were created to illustrate the Netherlandish landscape during the months of the year. This paintings were a commission for a wealthy merchant from Antwerp named Niclaes Jongelinck.

CONTENT:

The are peasants playing hockey, cooking a pig, returning from a hunt, and enjoying the winter landscape. This is a Northern European example of the interest in portraying narratives. the mountain ranges featured in this landscape are imaginary and based on the Alps, not on the true lands of the Netherlands.

CONTEXT:

Virgil’s notion that the landscape gains meaning based on the activities of the people that are in it, may have been on the minds of the patron and artist. Bruegel was the greatest Netherlandish painter of the mid 16th century. Although he was a landscape painter, the dominance of human activity in his works were always the center of his focus. Like many of his contemporaries, Bruegel traveled to Italy to study art, but unlike other artists, he chose not to incorporate classical motifs into his paintings.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Bruegel’s painting, with its bare trees and people bundled against the cold and hard-packed snow, is part of a long tradition in Northern European art of portraying the months of the year and the activities that occurred during each month. The Hunters in the Snow, and the series to which it belongs, are in the medieval and early Renaissance tradition of the Labours of the Months: depictions of various rural activities and work understood by a spectator in Bruegel’s time as representing the different months or times of the year.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Rather than twelve paintings, Bruegel’s cycle divided the year into six seasons (paintings for five survive—the other four are The Harvesters, Return of the Herd, The Gloomy Day, and Haymaking). He has also chosen to give as much or more emphasis to the landscapes than to the activities depicted, with particular attention paid to the shifting colors of the times of year, from dark brown to blues and greens to yellows. This image—of winter—is the last in the series, dominated by whites and pale blues. If we imagine how they might have been displayed together in a room in Jongelinck’s house the effect would have been a chromatic progression through the seasons.

INTERPRETATION:

Bruegel’s focus on peasant activities in this cycle is something we might expect from him, as he is best known for his intimate, sensitive, and sometimes comical scenes of peasant life. Yet he was also a well-traveled and worldly artist who could craft complex scenes out of seemingly mundane activities. The painting’s distant mountains (below), drawn from his travels south of the Alps and so clearly a construction of the artist’s mind, are key to understanding how Bruegel has constructed the entire painting. His masterful ability to blend sweeping vistas with intimate portrayals of the human condition, and the mundane with the fantastical, is part of what makes his paintings—including Hunters in the Snow—so enduring. In replicating the world on a scale both large and small he seems to present a mirror to the human condition itself: continuously locked to life’s day to day activities, yet often striving to see the world in all its glory in an instant.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS: