



Heavenly Discourses Week 6 The Sky In Art



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AIM

Understanding how the sky
has been translated into a painting
or image inside buildings and
monuments and why.



Iconography

From the Greek *eikon* meaning image or likeness.

The study of the symbolic meanings that pictorial forms convey in order to deal with complex themes and ideas, and the ways that they change and develop.

Where paintings depend heavily on such symbolic forms of meaning the viewer may need specific kinds of knowledge in order to 'read' them.

Some works of art are organised as complex allegories that clearly invite us to regard their pictured objects as decipherable symbols. Other paintings may make use of similar objects but in ways that require no such deciphering. In one case the clues may point in one way, in another case in another. There is no clear line dividing the one type of work from the other and no hard and fast rule that will tell us what to do in any given case. **In the absence of documentary evidence, the best we can do is respond to the clues.**

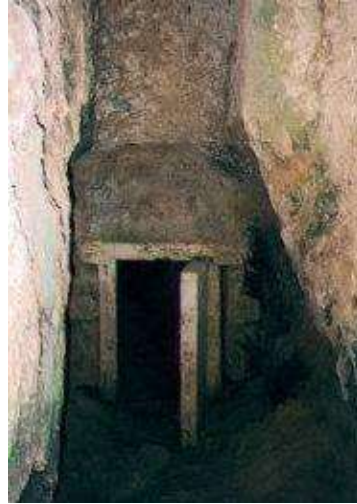
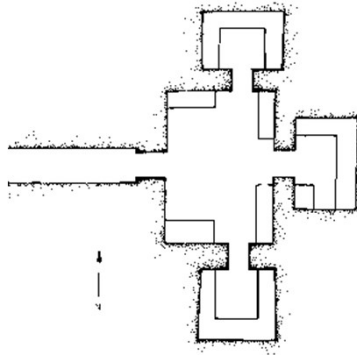
Harrison, Charles. *An Introduction to Art*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009, p.130.

Iconology

Begins where iconography ends.

Iconology takes the identification achieved through iconographic analysis and attempts to explain how and why such imagery was chosen in terms of the broader cultural background of the image. The idea is **to explain why we can see these images as 'symptomatic' or characteristic of a particular culture.**

D'Alleva, Anne. *Methods & Theories of Art History*. London: Laurence King Publishing, 2005, p.21.

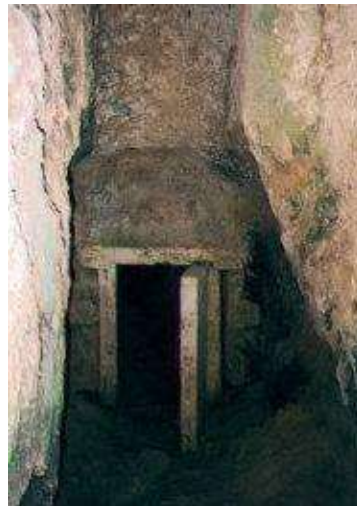


Etrurian Tomb of the Monkey (Tomba della Scimmia)

Chiusi, Italy

Period : 480- 470 BCE

Lehmann, Karl. 'The Dome of Heaven.' *The Art Bulletin* 27, no. 1 1945: 1-27.



Etrurian Tomb of the Monkey (Tomba della Scimmia)

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Temple of Bel,
Palmyra, Syria.
Dedicated in 45 CE and
rebuilt by Agrippa about
a century later.



Temple of Bel,
Palmyra, Syria.
Ceiling of the
southern adytum.



Temple of Bel,
Palmyra, Syria.
Ceiling of the
southern adytum.



Early Christian patterns of heaven on vaults and ceilings combine three attributes:

1. **decorative ideals** of formal beauty
2. an **order of speculative reasoning**
3. the concept of a **permanently established world.**

Lehmann, Karl. 'The Dome of Heaven.' *The Art Bulletin* 27, no. 1 1945: 1-27.



Archaic perfume vase in the shape of Siren, c. 540 BCE. Anonymous. *Image:* Walters Art Museum.

1. The Sirens were heavenly demons of astrological character.
2. Sirens and related winged figures continued to be used in a similar diagonal position as the supporters of a central representation on ceilings.
3. The canopy as a symbol of heaven was a common central element in the decoration of ancient ceilings.

Lehmann, Karl. 'The Dome of Heaven.' *The Art Bulletin* 27, no. 1 1945: 1-27.

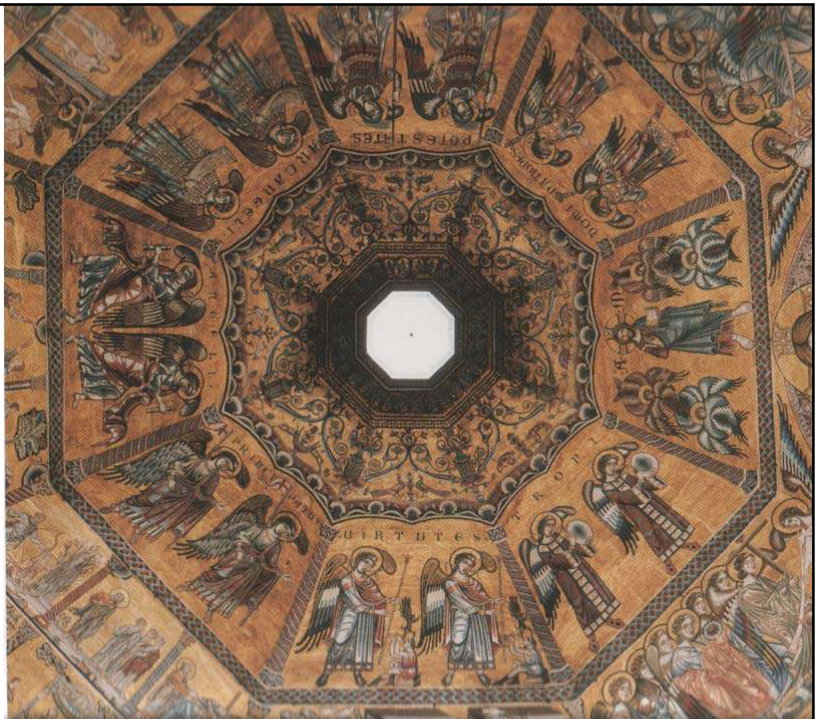
Basilica di San
Marco Venice, Italy



Venice, San Marco, East
Dome, Late Byzantine, 1100-
1300



Battistero, Florence,
begun 1113, mosaics
begun 1225



Stephenson, David. *Visions of Heaven,
the Dome in European Architecture*. New
York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005.

Church of the Chora,
Istanbul, Turkey
c.1050-1320
fresco c.1303-20



Church of the Chora,
Istanbul, Turkey
c. 1050-1320
mosaics c.1303-20



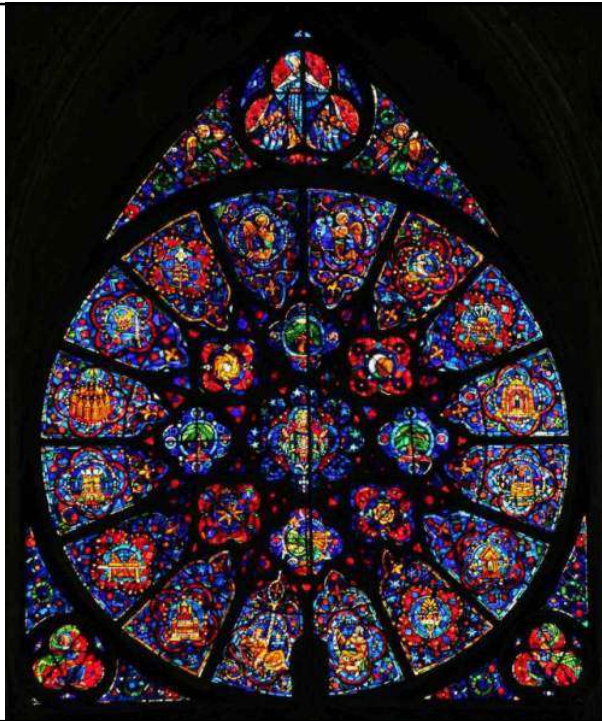
Battistero, Padua, Italy
c.1200-1378
Fresco mid-1370s:
Guisto de'Menabuoi



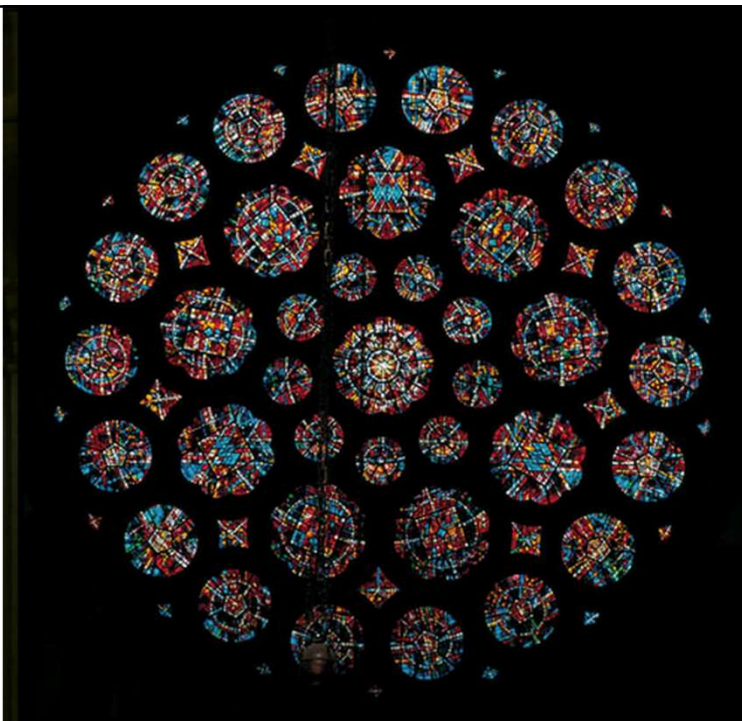
Duomo, Parma, Italy,
1090-1130
Remodelled with fresco
1523-30 by Correggio
(1489?-1534)



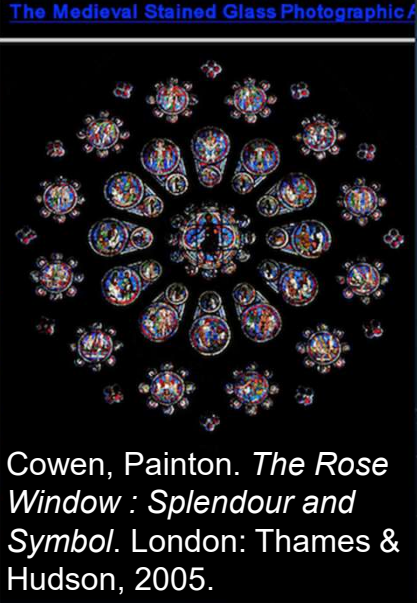
Rose Window,
Reims Cathedral,
France



Rose window,
St Albans
Cathedral,
France







Cowen, Painton. *The Rose Window : Splendour and Symbol*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2005.

<http://www.therosewindow.com/pilot/scope.htm> is run by Painton Cowen and contains full photographic coverage for almost all famous medieval monuments located in Britain and in France.



A rare seventeenth-century Rose Window,
Chaource Cathedral, France.

Cowen, Painton. *The Rose Window: Splendour and Symbol*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2005, p.19.
Dow, Helen J. 'The Rose-Window.' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 20, no. 3/4 (1957): 248-297.

There is also the problem of the name 'rose window' and even 'la rose' in French in referring to windows. Applying this term to circular windows is a comparatively recent habit originating probably in the eighteenth century; Helen Dow points out that Camille Enlart suggests that the word derives from 'roue' or 'row' in old French. Certainly the word 'wheel' – or its Latin equivalent 'rota' – was in use at least by the mid-thirteenth century.

Above the portal beneath the rose / wheel window at Cremona is the inscription 'M.CC.LXXIII Magister Jacobus Porrata de Cumis Fecit Hanc **Rotam**' ('**Magister Jacobus Porrata of Cumis made this wheel, 1274**'). The west rose window at Reims cathedral was referred to as the 'O' by the Master Mason Bernard de Soissons on his plaque that once used to be in the cathedral and it is as the 'O' that Jean de Jandun refers to the transept roses at Notre Dame in Paris writing in 1323 – or in his language as 'the fourth vowel'.



Qusayr Amra is one of several castles, hunting lodges and fortresses built across the deserts of Syria and Jordan during the first half of the eighth century, roughly 100 years after the death of Muhammad, used as **desert retreats** to escape plague and intrigue found in big cities like Damascus, providing safety and relaxation.

Probably built by the **Umayyad caliph al-Walid II 724-743** while he was still an *amir*, or prince. It is made of sand-colored limestone ... the main hall comprises three barrel-vaulted aisles — among the first of their kind — 45 feet long and 35 feet wide. A door on the western wall leads into an attached bath complex, once fed by rain water stored in an underground cistern.

The Roman style baths include an *apodyterium*, or changing room; a *tepidarium*, or warm room; and a *caldarium*, or hot room, along with a domed chamber for housing firewood. Interior decoration. **Brightly colored frescoes, and mosaics over the walls of the caldarium, cover practically every inch of wall and ceiling presenting images of battle and the hunt, symbols of the zodiac, and mythological scenes.** The harsh climate, graffiti, and bad restoration have diminished the beauty of the paintings, but their exuberance remains palpable.



On the one hand, it is a **masterpiece of Islamic architecture, commissioned by an Arab prince a full century after** Muslim armies captured Jordan. It also depicts **the amorphous line between antiquity and the Middle Ages, between Jordan's Roman past and its Islamic future.** Although debates about the meaning of the fresco cycles continue, the overall message is one of the caliph's might, as expressed through courtly luxury, through his indulgent fineries and his mastery over the environment with the use of water, especially in the context of the surrounding desert.

Qusayr Amra seems to have been abandoned not long after al-Walid's death in 744. Within a decade, Abbasid revolutionaries would sweep the Umayyads from power, claiming to restore dignity to a caliphate tarred by the impious and the power-hungry. Whatever we make of al-Walid, Qusayr Amra offers a snapshot of a civilization in the making. It is a meditation on the eclectic cocktail of ingredients — **Greek, Roman, Persian, pagan and Christian** — that mixed to produce **Islam's first courtly culture.**

Christian C. Sahner, 'Snapshot of a Civilization in the Making' *Wall St Journal*, 27 Nov 2010.
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704141104575588302922407126.html>

Betsy Williams, Metropolitan Museum of Art ,New York:
<http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2012/byzantium-and-islam/blog/where-in-the-world/posts/qusayr-amra>

Possibly the only trace of an Islamic planispheric star-map, thought to have been derived from late classical maps.

It is thought to be the earliest attempt to represent the night sky from the inside of a hemispherical surface, rather than a flat surface or exterior view as per the ancient globes.

The four arched windows face the cardinal points.

2.7m diameter dome.
Decorations covers approximately 10 square metres.



References

Patricia Baker, 'The Frescoes of Amra', *Saudi Aramco World*, Vol. 31, No. 4, (1980).

Khoury, Rami, 'Qasr' Amra' *Saudi Aramco World*, Vol. 41, No. 5, (1990).

Savage-Smith, Emelie, 'Celestial Mapping'. In: *The History of Cartography*. Volume 2, Book 1: Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies, edited by John Harley and David Woodward. (1992) pp.12-76.

Online at:

http://press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC_V1/Volume1.html

Fowden, Garth. *Qusayr Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria*. Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 2004.

5 min short video – World Monuments Fund:

<http://on.aol.com/video/a-look-at-centuries-old-murals-at-qusayr-amra-in-jordan-517741948>



Representation of the months. Part of early Christian mosaic pavement.
Second half of the 6th century.
Thebes Archaeological Museum.

Top left: **July** with a bouquet of wheat, and
Top right: **February** with two fowls.



Basilica di San Miniato al Monte,
Florence.





Dated 1207 by a Latin inscription in the nave:
zodiac and marble pavement constructed.
San Miniato al Monte, Florence.

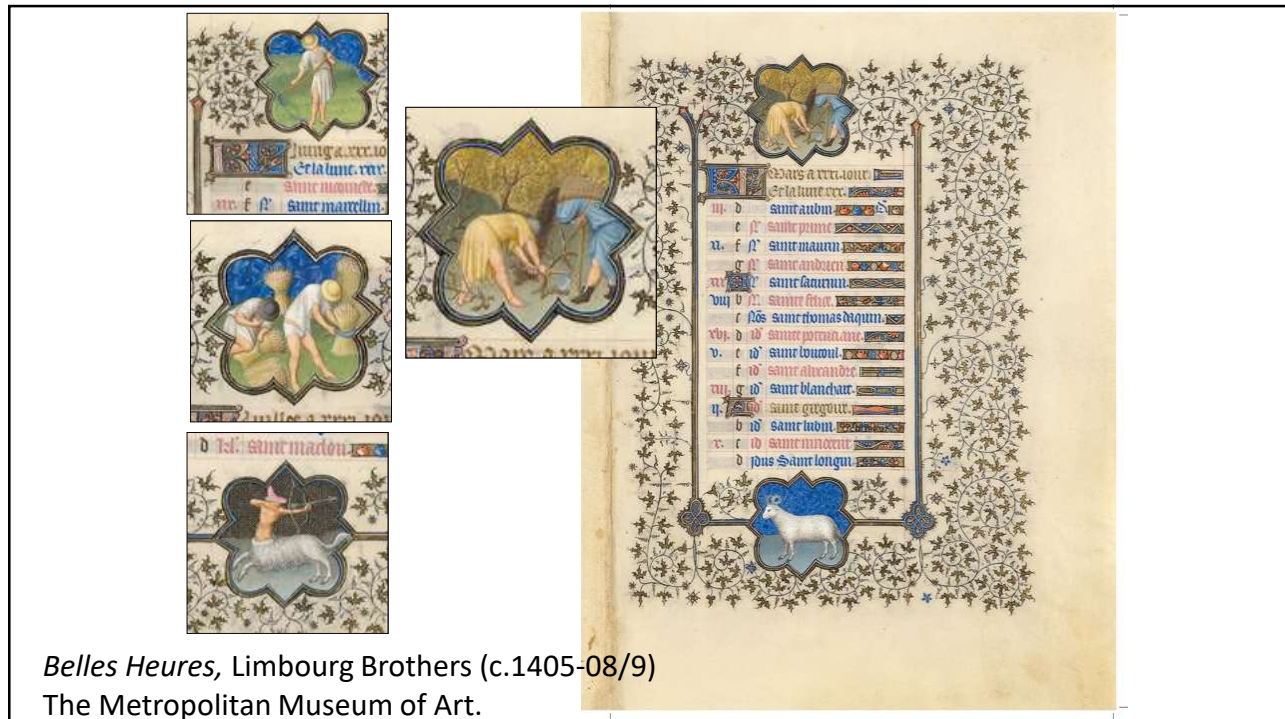
ASTROLOGY IN MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS



Aries, Taurus, Gemini and Cancer.
From Bede's *De temporum ratione*,
(c.722-725). 13th century, Egerton MS
3088, f. 17.v.

Page, Sophie. *Astrology in Medieval Manuscripts*.
London: The British Library, 2002, p.44.

34. Aries, Taurus, Gemini and Cancer, Bede's *De temporum ratione*, thirteenth century. Egerton MS 3088, f. 17v.



Belles Heures, Limbourg Brothers (c.1405-08/9)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The great feasts and saints for each day.

Number of days in the solar and lunar months.

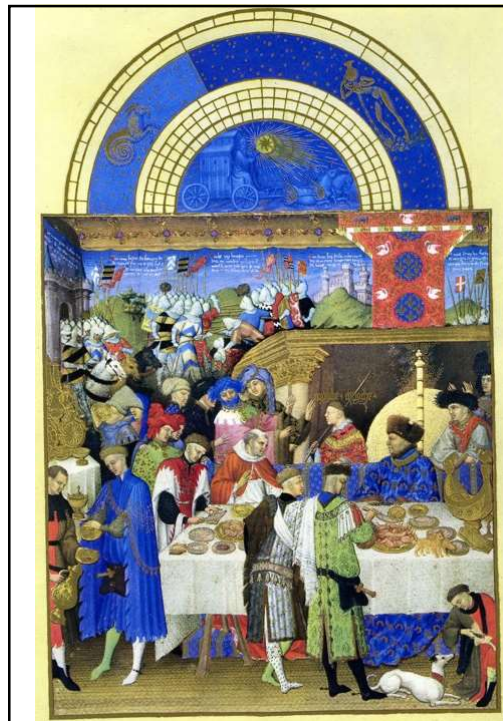
The traditional **Golden Number**, written in Roman numerals. This number situations a given year within the Metonic 19-year cycle which co-ordinates the phases of the moon with the solar year. The Roman numerals identify the phases of the moon within a given year in the 19-year cycle.

Très Riches Heures, Limbourg Brothers (c.1412-1416)

Nombre des nouvel
New Golden Number which became necessary when the imprecise 19-year cycle led to a discrepancy.

Les quantites des jours
The length of each day between sunrise and sunset, calculated in hours and minutes according to the latitude of Paris.

Nones (7th day of the long months, March, May, Quinctilis, October, and the 5th of the others), **ides** (15th if the month was long, and the 13th if the month was short), and **kalends** (the first of the month), all of which situate feast days in the month.

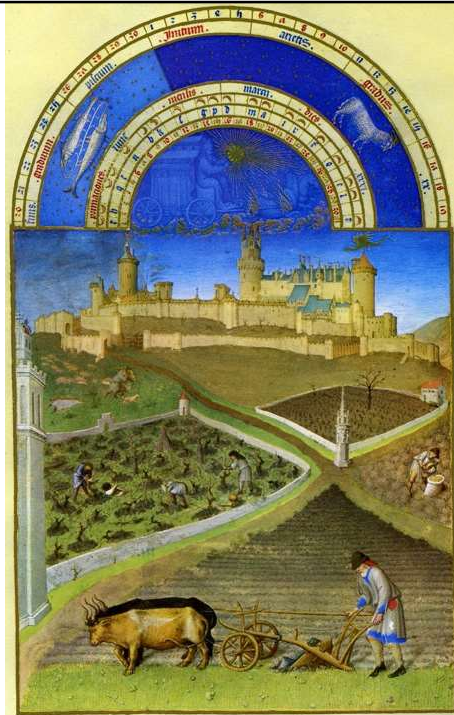


January



February

March



June

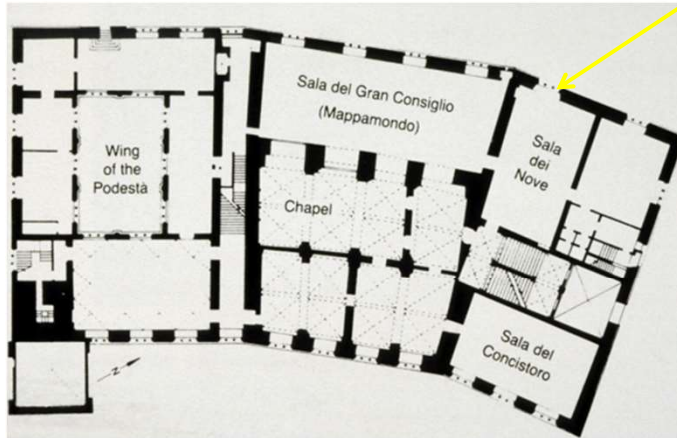




Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, Italy



South



North





Sala dei Nove, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, Italy.

Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *The Good City, The Good Government, and The Bad Government and City*, 1337-1340, fresco, Sala dei Nove, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena. *Image: Il Tesoro di Siena.*



Sala dei Nove, Palazzo Pubblico Siena, Italy

Starn, Randolph. *Ambrogio Lorenzetti, the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena*. New York: George Braziller, 1994, p.27.



Medallions of the east wall, "The Good City-Republic"



The Quadrivium, Philosophy, and the Sienese Coat of Arms

Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astrology were the four mathematical branches of the medieval school curriculum. (Music was the science of measure, harmony, proportion, not performing art.) Geometry, her compass poised on a drawing board, closely resembles Nicola and Giovanni Pisano's relief on the *Fontana Maggiore* at Perugia. Astrology holds an armillary sphere rather than an older type of astrolabe. The figures of the quadrivium are oriented toward Philosophy in a queenly frontal pose, her crown, scepter, and volumes of books signifying her place as the culmination of human learning. However, it is the medallion containing the Sienese coat of arms on the other side of the original door that completes the series and in effect anchors the liberal arts in the Sienese republic.



Starn, Randolph. *Ambrogio Lorenzetti, the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena*. New York: George Braziller, 1994, p.97.

Medallions of the west wall, "The City-State under Tyranny"



Jupiter, with rulership of Sagittarius (left) and Pisces (right).

Starn, Randolph. *Ambrogio Lorenzetti, the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena*. New York: George Braziller, 1994, p.90.

The heavenly order as medieval cosmology



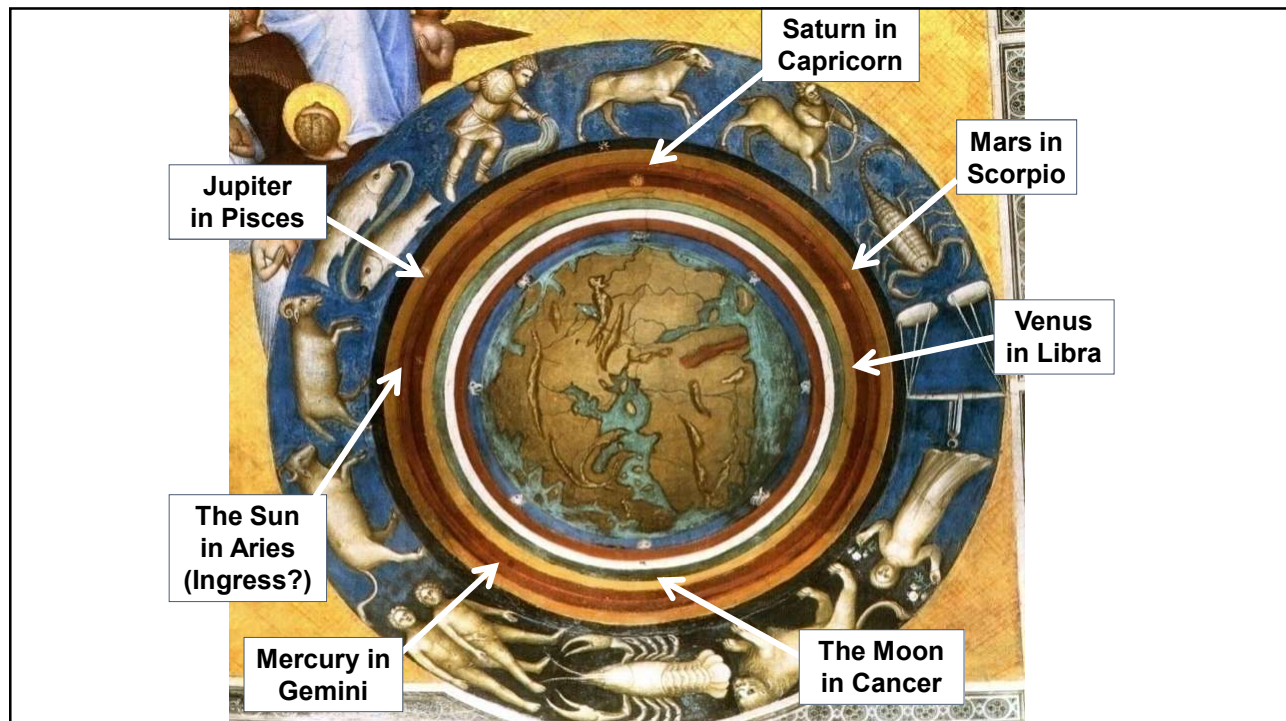
Cosmological diagram, early 14th century, Royal MS 19 C 1, f.50.

Page, Sophie. *Astrology in Medieval Manuscripts*. London: The British Library, 2002, p.36.

The heavenly order as medieval cosmology

Guisto de'Menabuoi, *The Creation of the World*, late 1370s, fresco, drum, Baptistry, Padua.

Norman, Diana. *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion 1280-1400*, Volume I: *Interpretive Essays*, p.211.





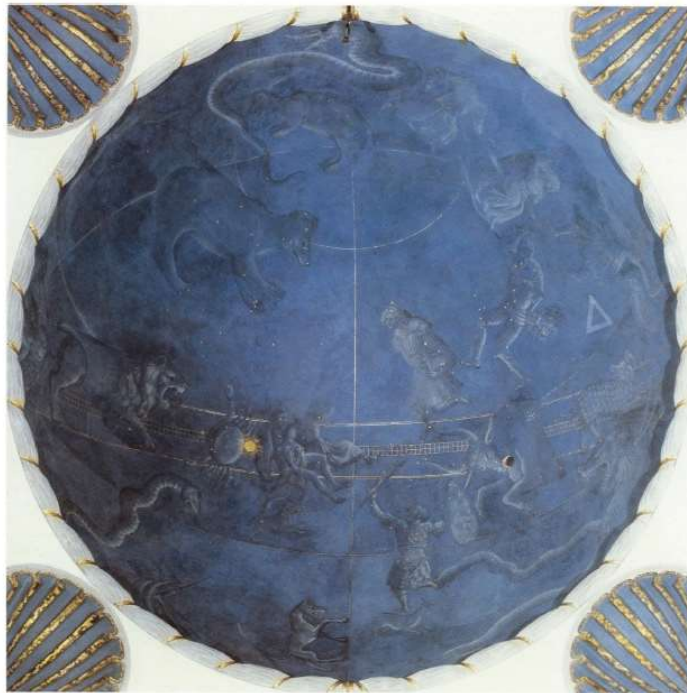
The painted sky in the dome above the altar area ('scarsella') of the Sacristia Vecchia in Florence's San Lorenzo.

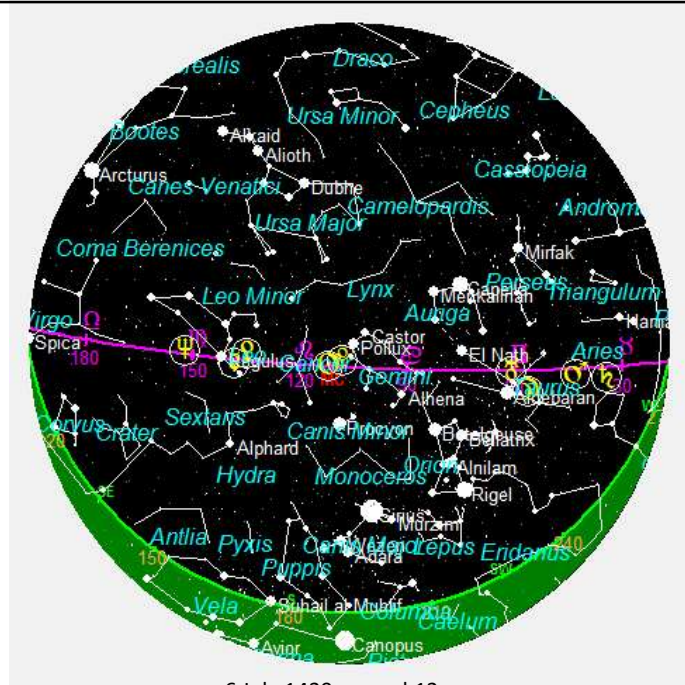
Beck attributes this to Leo Battista Alberti sometime between 1435 and 1439.

Beck, James, 'Leon Battista Alberti and the "Night Sky" at San Lorenzo'
Artibus et Historiae, 10, No. 19 (1989), p.13.

Heilbron dates this to 6 July 1439 around 12 noon (Council of Florence).

Patricia Fortini Brown, 'Laetentur Caeli: The Council of Florence and the Astronomical Fresco in the Old Sacristy,'
Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 44(1981): p.177.





6 July 1439 around 12 noon

‘And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars...

Revelation 12:1

‘The Woman of the Apocalypse’

Written by John near the end of the first century as visions that he received on the isle of Patmos.

The Madonna of Humility, Lippo di Dalmasio
c. 1360 – 1410, Bologna.

Egg tempera (highly repainted) on canvas, 110 x 87 cm.



Madonna of Humility
c. 1420
22.8 x 17.8 cm

Lorenzo Monaco
(c.1370 - c.1425)



Madonna and Child, 1320
Simone Martini.

Tempera on wood, 21 x 26 cm

New York, Metropolitan
Museum of Art, Robert
Lehman Collection





The Annunciation, 1333
Simone Martini in collaboration with Lippo Memmi
33x23 cm, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy.



Duccio di Buoninsegna. *Triptych (The Holy Virgin and the Christ Child with St. Dominic and St. Aurea)*. c.1300, tempera on panel. The National Gallery, London, UK.



The Maestà (*Virgin and Child in Majesty*),
1311 Duccio di Buoninsegna
egg tempera, Museo del Opera, Siena.



Guido Reni (1575-1642)
Apollo in His Chariot Preceded by Dawn (1613-1614) fresco,
Casino Pallavicini-Rospigliosi, Rome

Gahtan, Maia Wellington. 'Giorgio Vasari and the Image of the Hour.' *INSAP Conference Series (Proceedings of a conference held October 18-23, 2009 in Venezia, Italy)*, edited by Enrico Maria Corsini, 169-179. San Francisco: Astronomical Society of the Pacific, 2011.



J.M.W.Turner (1775-1851), *Sunset on Rouen*, c.1830, watercolor, British Museum



J.M.W.Turner (1775-1851),
The Bay of Uri on Lake Lucern, from Brunnen, c.1841-42,
gouache, pencil, watercolour on paper, 24.4 x 29.5 cm, British Museum



Sir John Everett Millais (1829-1896),
The Blind Girl, 1856,
oil on canvas, 80.8 cm x 53.4 cm.
Image: Birmingham Museums and Art
Gallery.



Joan Miró (1893-1983)
Constellacions: Iconografia
 The Railway Station, Majorca
 (Photo: D.Gunzburg)

Joan Miró (1893-1983) *Constellation: Toward the Rainbow*, 1941, gouache and oil wash on paper
45.7 cm x 38.1 cm. Image: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Joan Miró (1893-1983)
Images of the Moon
The Railway Station,
Majorca. Photo:
D.Gunzburg.





Joan Miró (1893-1983)
Wall of The Moon, 1958, ceramics
 Unesco Building, Paris, France.



Joan Miró (1893-1983), with José Llorens Artigas (1892-1980), *Wall of The Moon*, 1958, ceramic mural, 220 x 750 cm.
 Acquired by UNESCO for the artistic decoration of its Headquarters in Paris in 1958. *Image: Wikimedia Commons.*

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