



The Annunciation and the Journey to Bethlehem

Date

ca. 1480-1490

Primary Maker

Guidoccio Cozzarelli

Medium

tempera on wood

Description

The Annunciation and the Journey to Bethlehem originally formed the upper right-hand corner of a large altarpiece, the exact format of which is unknown. The two scenes were part of the series illustrating either the infancy of Christ or the life of the Virgin, which may have served as

the backdrop to an image of the Madonna and Child Enthroned; in that case, the cornice and pilaster at the far left of the panel may have been part of the Virgin's throne. However, it is more likely that the foreground of the picture was occupied by a scene of the Nativity. This is suggested by the lower edge of the classical entablature, which, before it was partially repainted by an overzealous restorer, appeared as a ruin. In Renaissance painting, the setting for the birth of Christ often included a ruined classical building symbolizing the eclipse of the old dispensation. The departure of the Virgin and Joseph for Bethlehem was a subject rarely depicted in Italian medieval and Renaissance art. It is also highly unusually that in the scene of the Annunciation, the archangel Gabriel is portrayed carrying a palm branch, thereby reflecting Dante's description of the Incarnation (II Paradiso 32.112-14). The works of Cozzarelli, a painter of miniatures, altarpieces, and cassone panels (secular paintings used to decorate furniture), are frequently confused with those of his presumed master, Matteo di Giovanni (active 1452-1495). The format of Cozzarelli's paintings and his feeling for decorative detail and textural richness are in the Sienese stylistic tradition, but his interest in perspective, naturalistic movement, classical architecture, and antique ornamentation reflects the significant influence of contemporary Florentine art.

Dimensions

Sight: 26 3/4 x 21 1/4 in. (67.9 x 54 cm) Framed: 34 1/4 x 27 3/4 x 4 in. (87 x 70.5 x 10.2 cm)