

Fra Filippo Lippi, 'The Annunciation'



In this beautiful, quiet and really rather understated painting, Fra Filippo Lippo describes for us the moment when Mary, Joseph's virgin bride is told by the Angel Gabriel that she is to bear the son of God.



The figures are shown in a contained space, Gabriel has appeared from 'outside' and is positioned to the left of the painting in the open garden, whilst Mary is seen seated 'inside', in the safety of her home; the very symmetry of the painting connects the two figures but so do two other key elements. The hand of God, the wrist of which is positioned exactly in the centre top of the painting points down to the symbolic dove, positioned just at the level of Marys womb...

"But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?" 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered 'and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow'.
Luke 1,

Gabriel looks at Mary, Mary looks at the dove which has been gifted by the 'hand of God' and so in this most beautiful of paintings, the narrative is exquisitely and quietly complete.