



Giotto: The Arena Chapel Frescoes

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The Arena Chapel is a small plain brick building in Padua whose interior is entirely covered with frescoes by Giotto, painted shortly after 1300 and still miraculously intact. Thirty-six large panels tell the stories of Joachim and Anna (the Virgin's parents), the Virgin Mary, and the life of Jesus from birth to resurrection; and on the entrance wall opposite the altar is a Last Judgement. These frescoes have always been seen as the starting point of Renaissance art, and are among its most famous masterpieces. As part of a continuing conservation campaign, between 1988 and 1991 the frescoes were thoroughly examined and recorded in minute detail. The results of this recording are now made available for the first time in their entirety. All the panels are shown complete and in a series of details, many of them actual size, in which expressions and brush strokes speak out vividly across 700 years. The reproductions are printed in colour to the highest quality. Accompanying texts provide the art-historical background, explain the legends, and describe the frescoes' survival through the centuries. This book captures the artist's supreme achievement in all its epoch-making power - his magisterial representation of weight and volume, his genius for storytelling, his compassion and his irresistible sense of drama. This is the definitive record of one of Western art's founding treasures. Giuseppe Basile is superintendent of the restoration work at the Arena Chapel and the Basilica di San Francesco d'Assisi. He teaches theory and history of art restoration at the University of Rome.

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