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Abstract: Citta ideale e citta reale: I paradossi della prospettiva

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The development of linear perspective is traditionally linked with a renewed interest in naturalism. If so the introduction of perspective at the time of Brunelleschi (c.1415-1425) should have brought about a revolution in the realistic representation of towns. The story is much more complex. The roots of a new approach can be traced back to Arabic interpretations of Euclid's *Optics* in the 9th century. In the Latin West, Viterbo played an important part in changing the philosophical climate (especially 1250-1260). The consequences of this shift become visible in Giotto's work in Assisi and Padua.

Striking however is a curious parallel development. While it is undoubtedly true that there important links between the traditions of surveying and perspective, some aspects of these traditions develop in isolation. Giotto was chief of fortifications in Padua and must therefore have been acquainted with surveying of physical objects and territories. Although the life of Saint Francis is depicted in "realistic" landscapes, his frescoes in Assisi provide no visions of places which are recognizable in the physical world. Nor do his frescoes in the Arena Chapel in Padua.

A next important step occurs in Siena. Simone Martini was hired specifically to map the Sienese territory. A fresco (1328) attributed to Simone Martini shows us only a very idealized view of Sassoforte and Massa Marittima. A decade later Pietro Lorenzetti does his fresco of *Good Government* (1337-1340) again with idealized and highly stylized views of Siena. Strikingly his most impressive proto-perspectival work is in a religious painting of the *Annunciation* (Siena, 1344).

These parallel strands become more accentuated in the fifteenth century. In the first half century (1400-1450) there is a greater commitment to representing physically recognizable places in Northern Europe where there is no linear perspective than Italy where there is linear perspective. Notable, in this context are the Brothers Limbourg (1413-1416) who introduce a number of clearly recognizable palaces and churches without a commitment to even proto-perspectival methods. In the second half of the fifteenth century the two traditions begin to overlap more clearly and yet it is not until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that this link between perspective and physical reality emerges clearly. Far from being a sudden revolution, linear perspective emerges in the course of nearly four centuries and leads to a parallel development of both ideal and real cities.

Cf. Jeroen Stumpel, *The Province of Painting. Theories of Italian Renaissance Art*, Utecht, 1990. "Grounds and backgrounds. Some remarks about composition in Renaissance Painting," pp. 131-172. "Perspective's veil. On the composition of storie and Alberti's theory of the artificial image", pp. 174-230.