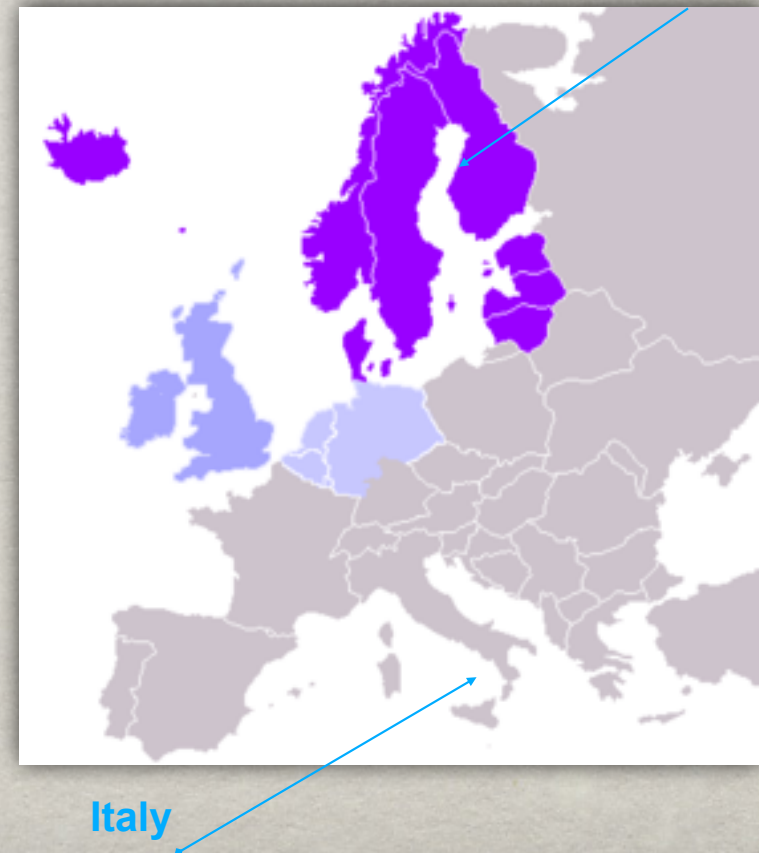


The Northern Renaissance & Mannerism

(15th to late 16th Centuries)

The Northern Renaissance is the term used to describe the Renaissance in **Northern Europe**, or more broadly in Europe outside Italy. Before 1500 the Italian (High) Renaissance had almost no influence outside Italy. After 1500, the Renaissance spread around **Europe**, but Late Gothic influences remained present until the arrival of Baroque (the next period in art history)



Northern
Europe

Italy

Society

- Science is looked as a way of understanding the universe and God
- The **Protestant Reformation** leads many Christians to follow the Protestant religion rather than the Roman Catholic faith
- The **printing press** (invented in the 1440s) and its power to mass-produce printed material dramatically affected the course of the Renaissance in Northern Europe
- The Renaissance in general is known as a period of exploration and expansion – “the Age of Discovery”. Eventually European power, and also Renaissance art and ideals, **spread around the globe**



Mannerism

[16th Century]

Mannerism is a period of art considered to be a direct revolt against the goals of the Renaissance

Protestant Reformation:

- Within a few decades, the **religious unity** of Western Christianity was shattered
- The Protestant Reformation was a movement in the 16th century to reform the Catholic Church in Western Europe
- Martin Luther led a group of Christians to leave the Church in revolt to form their own **religion**



Parmigianino, *The Madonna with the Long Neck*. Painting, oil on panel, 1534.

Characteristics of the “Mannerist” style:

- ✨ **Imbalanced**, odd perspectives
- ✨ Restlessness- “Nervous Art” created to mirror a world filled with confusion
- ✨ Impossible **human poses**
- ✨ **Distorted & Elongated** figures
- ✨ Figures are slender, elegant, graceful and become **supernatural** looking
- Multiple “scenes” in one painting
- Enormous Madonna figure who looks content
- Lifeless Christ child
- Crowded figures that look all around/ mysterious leg

BIG QUESTION:
Is it an accident or intentional that the Christ child looks lifeless?

Mannerist Influences in the 21st Century?

The work of American painter, **John Currin**, shows a wide range of influences, including sources as diverse as the Renaissance (Mannerism), **popular culture**, magazines, and contemporary **fashion models**.

Many of his paintings depict female figures; he often distorts or **exaggerates** the natural form of the human body.



John Currin, The Cripple, oil on canvas, 1997. 44 x 36 inches (111.8 x 91.4 cm).

Northern Renaissance Art:

- As Renaissance art techniques moved to northern Europe, they changed and were adapted to **local circumstances**
- Paintings by these artists retain a **Gothic** influence; this is perhaps most evident in the works of Hieronymus Bosch.
- Northern art was more concerned with **Christianity** than with Greek and Roman influences, in part a reflection of the turmoil of the Protestant Reformation.
- **Symbolism** is used as a means of visual communication
- **Oil paint** (developed in 1410 by Jan van Eyk) is the medium of choice

Advantages of Oil Paint:

- **Slowed down the drying time**--> gave artists a chance to work more slowly so they could include more details in their paintings (the Italian artists working in fresco had limited time)
- Layers of transparent **glazes** added a new brilliance to colours & made paintings look as though they were lit from within

ITALIAN (HIGH) RENAISSANCE ART VS. NORTHERN RENAISSANCE ART

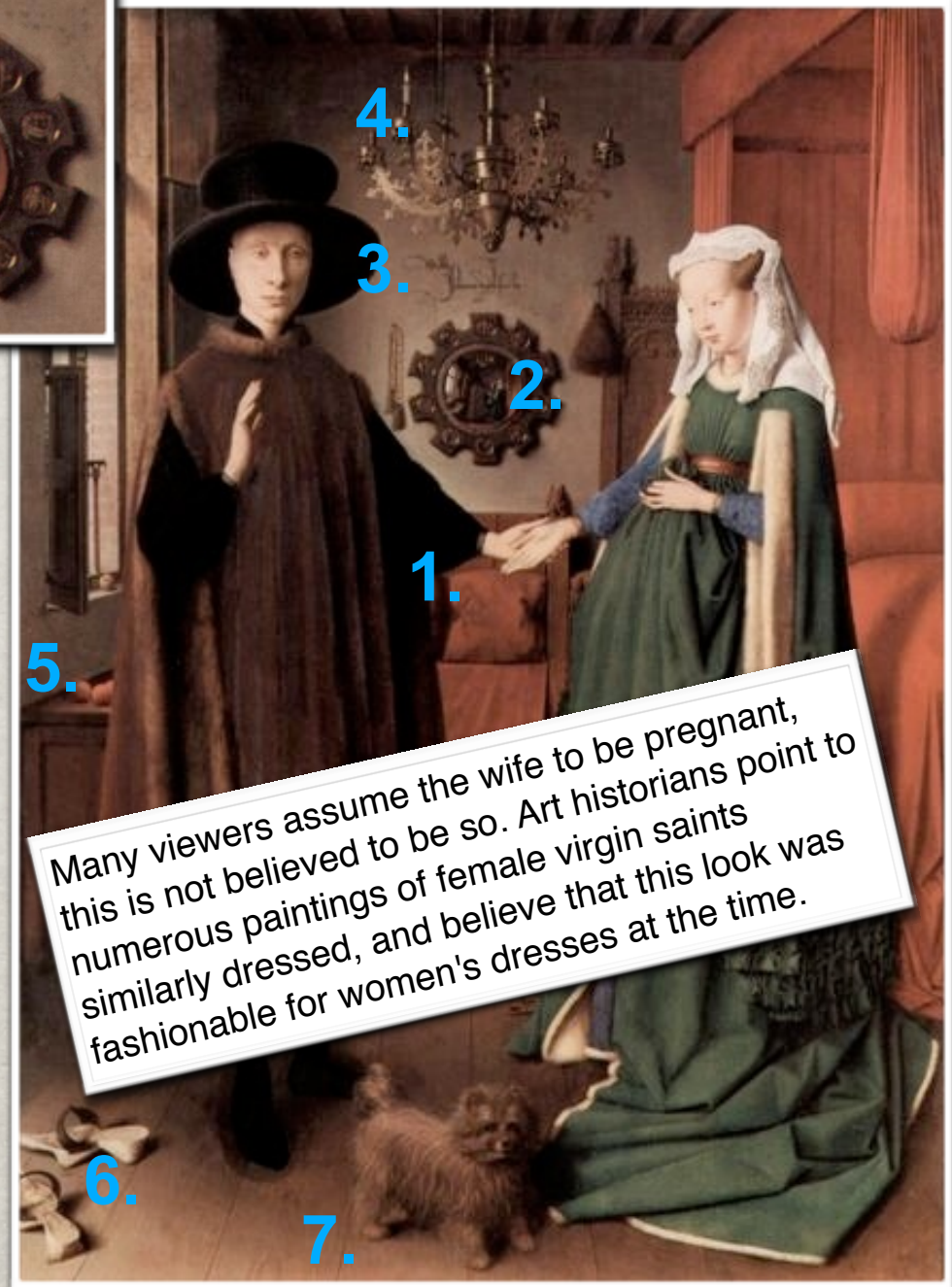
SPECIALTY	Ideal beauty	Intense realism
STYLE	Measured proportions, balanced compositions	Lifelike features, unflattering honesty
SUBJECTS	Religious and mythological scenes	Religious and domestic scenes
FIGURES	Heroic male nudes	Prosperous citizens, peasants
PORTRAITS	Formal, reserved	Reveal individual personality
MEDIA	Fresco, tempera, and oil paintings	Prints & oil paintings on wood panels
EMPHASIS	Underlying anatomical structure	Overall visual appearance
COMPOSITION	Static, balanced	Complex, irregular

Jan Van Eyck

- Dutch (Flemish) painter
- Painted in meticulous detail
- Captured the effects of light

Symbolism:

1. The wedding couple face the witnesses to say the ceremony, hand raised= **oath**
2. The mirror shows a reflection of the **witnesses** (priest and artist)
3. Above mirror= **Latin inscription** “Jan van Eyck was here”
4. Single burning candle= God’s presence
5. Fruit on table and windowsill= **innocence**
6. Removal of shoes= holy event is taking place
7. Little dog= **loyalty** that the husband and wife pledge to each other



Many viewers assume the wife to be pregnant, this is not believed to be so. Art historians point to numerous paintings of female virgin saints similarly dressed, and believe that this look was fashionable for women's dresses at the time.

Jan Van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Wedding*, oil on panel, 1434.

Albrecht Dürer

- German painter, printmaker, and mathematician
- Studied **perspective** and the theory of proportions in Italy and applied them to his own art

Knight, Death and the Devil

Engraving

- This panel is one of 15 woodcuts illustration the events of the **Apocalypse**, as described in the Bible
- **Symbolism:** a Christian knight with his dog (loyalty), a figure of death, and the devil...
- The knight rides **bravely** never turning from the Christian path



Albrecht Dürer, *Knight, Death, and the Devil*,
Engraving (Ink on paper), 1513–14. (24.4 x 19.1 cm)

Engraving is the practice of incising a design onto a hard, flat surface, by cutting grooves into it. Ink is then rolled on the plate and put through a printing press where the design is **printed** onto a surface such as paper.

Hieronymous Bosch

The Garden of Earthly Delights

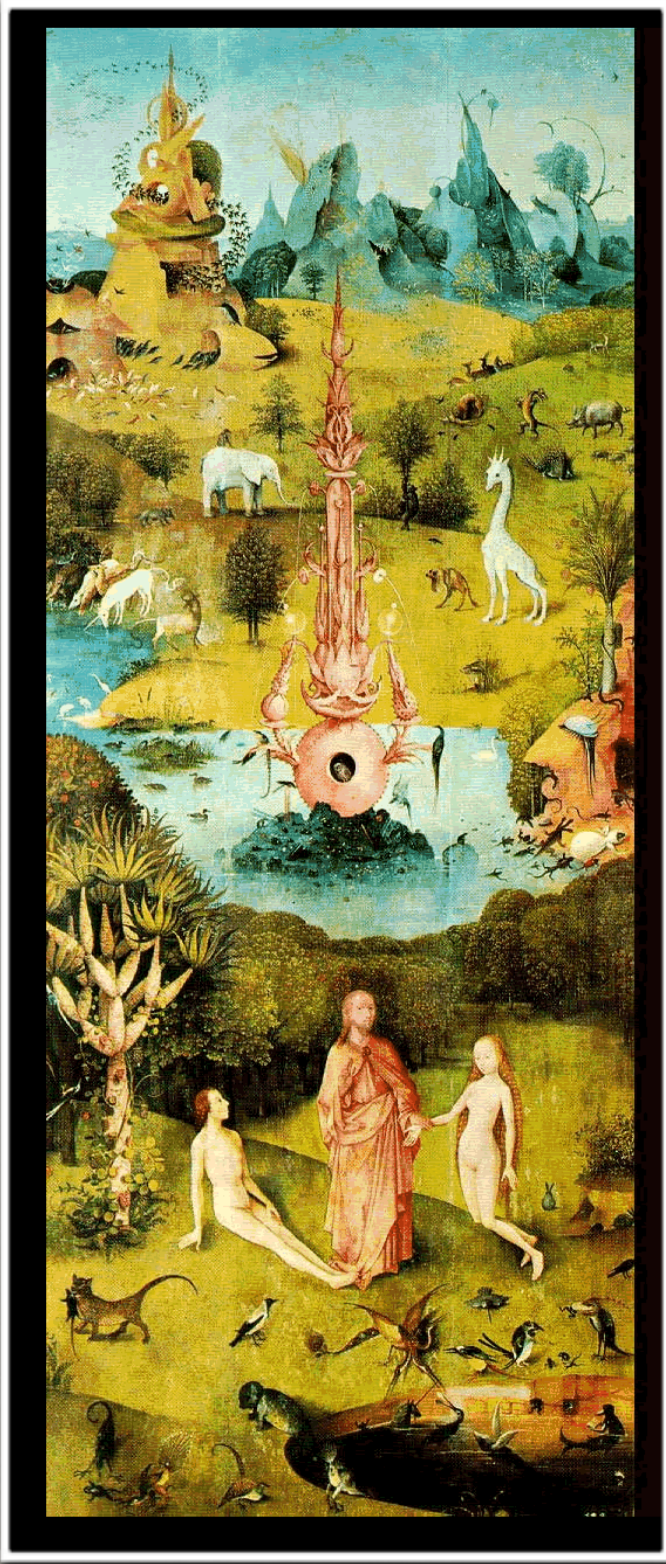
Painting, Oil on panel, **Triptych**

is a work of art (usually a panel painting) which is divided into three sections



Hieronymous Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, Oil-on-wood triptych, 220 x 389 cm.

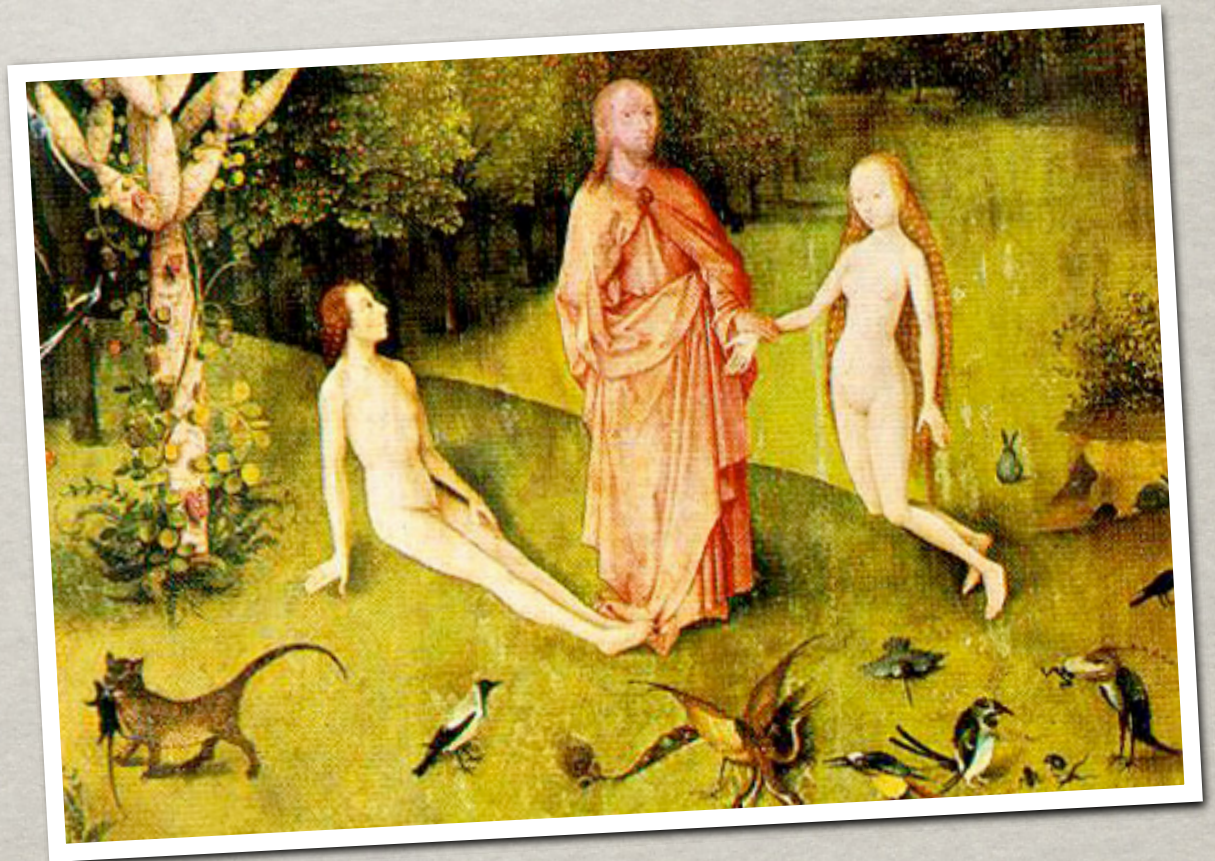
- Flemish (Dutch) painter- his paintings like those of the **Italian Mannerists** mirrored the growing fears and tensions of the people
- Bosch's pictures were meant to be viewed in two ways: 1) as stories, 2) as **symbolic messages** <https://tuinderlusten-jheronimusbosch.ntr.nl/en>
- His stories clearly focused on the subject of **good and evil**
- His paintings are often frightening or difficult to understand but are also **humorous**



Left Panel:

Paradise with Adam and Eve
and many wondrous animals

- Depicts animals living together with humans without **interaction**

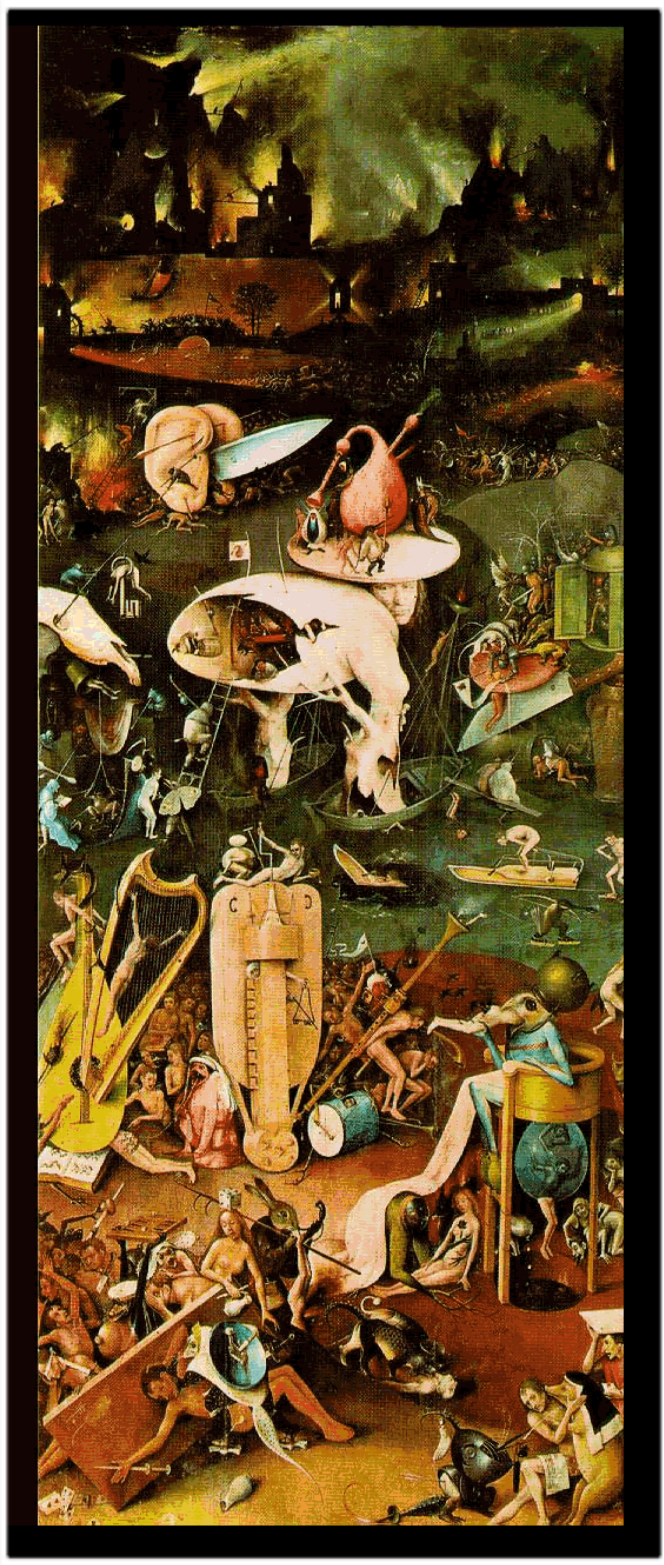




Middle Panel:

The **earthly delights** with numerous nude figures and tremendous fruit and birds

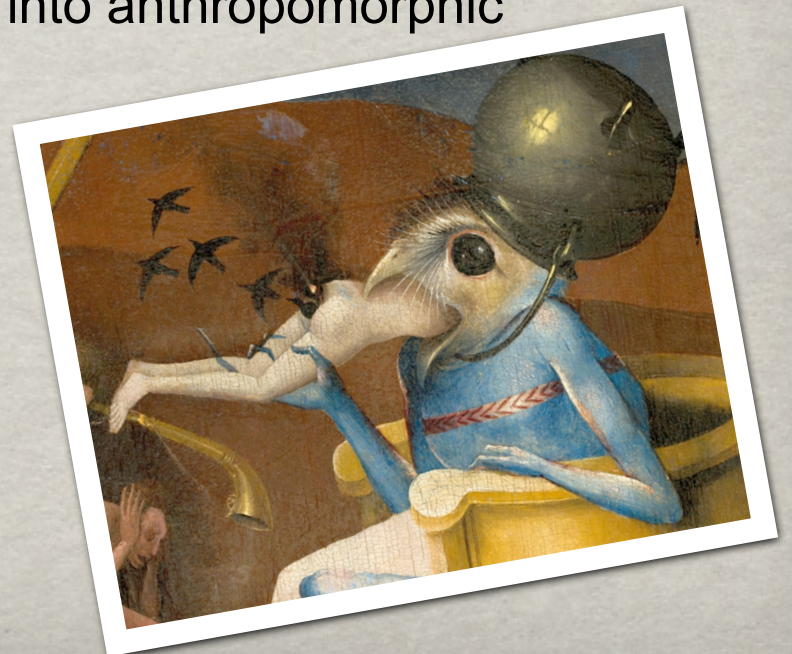
- **Lust** is shown to be the cause of man's downfall
- The **pleasures of the flesh** that the Italian Renaissance artists celebrated is **condemned** by Bosch
- Stresses the frailty and **wickedness** of humankind
- Animals and humans begin to **coexist and intermingle**



Right Panel:

Hell with depictions of fantastic punishments of the various types of sinners

- **Musical instruments** (which Italian Renaissance artists used to symbolize celestial harmony) are agents of the devil in this painting
- Image of a man crucified on a harp
- Animals **torture humans**, completing a transformation of “simple” creatures into anthropomorphic superiors



Northern Renaissance Influences in the 21st Century?



Kim Adams (Canadian b. 1951) **Bruegel-Bosch Bus**, 1996-ongoing sculpture-installation, 1960s Volkswagen bus, figurines, mixed media 243.8 x 168.9 x 414 cm

- *Bruegel-Bosch Bus* is an on-going work consisting of a **1960 Volkswagen van** that has been transformed into a **post-industrial** universe displaying fantastic and seductive worlds that play with our senses
- This futuristic diorama is a **post-apocalyptic** civilization on wheels
- It is based on the work of Bruegel and Bosch (two Northern Renaissance artists) and is meant as a **critique of our society**