The Arnolfini Portrait

Jan Van Eyck. C.1434 C.E., Oil on wood

- Video at Khan Academy
- Called other things . . . eg. The Arnolfini Wedding
- Content: Italian merchant Giovanni di Nicolao Arnolfini and possibly his wife, presumably in their home in the Flemish city of Bruges
- Unique:
  - It is considered one of the more original and complex paintings in Western art
    - because of the iconography,
    - the unusual geometric orthogonal perspective,
    - the use of the mirror to reflect the space,
    - and that the portrait is considered unique by some art historians as the record of a marriage contract in the form of a painting
- Van Eyck used the technique of applying layer after layer of thin translucent glazes to create a painting with an intensity of both tone and colour
- The illusionism of the painting was remarkable for its time
  - rendering of detail
  - use of light to evoke space in an interior
- according to Craig Harbison the painting "is the only fifteenth-century Northern panel to survive in which the artist’s contemporaries are shown engaged in some sort of action in a contemporary interior. It is indeed tempting to call this the first genre painting – a painting of everyday life – of modern times"
- debate over the meaning