

ANALYSIS OF THE HISTORICAL ARTISTIC HERITAGE OF A WORK OF THE EPOCH OF PROTO-RENAISSANCE

Pregledni članak

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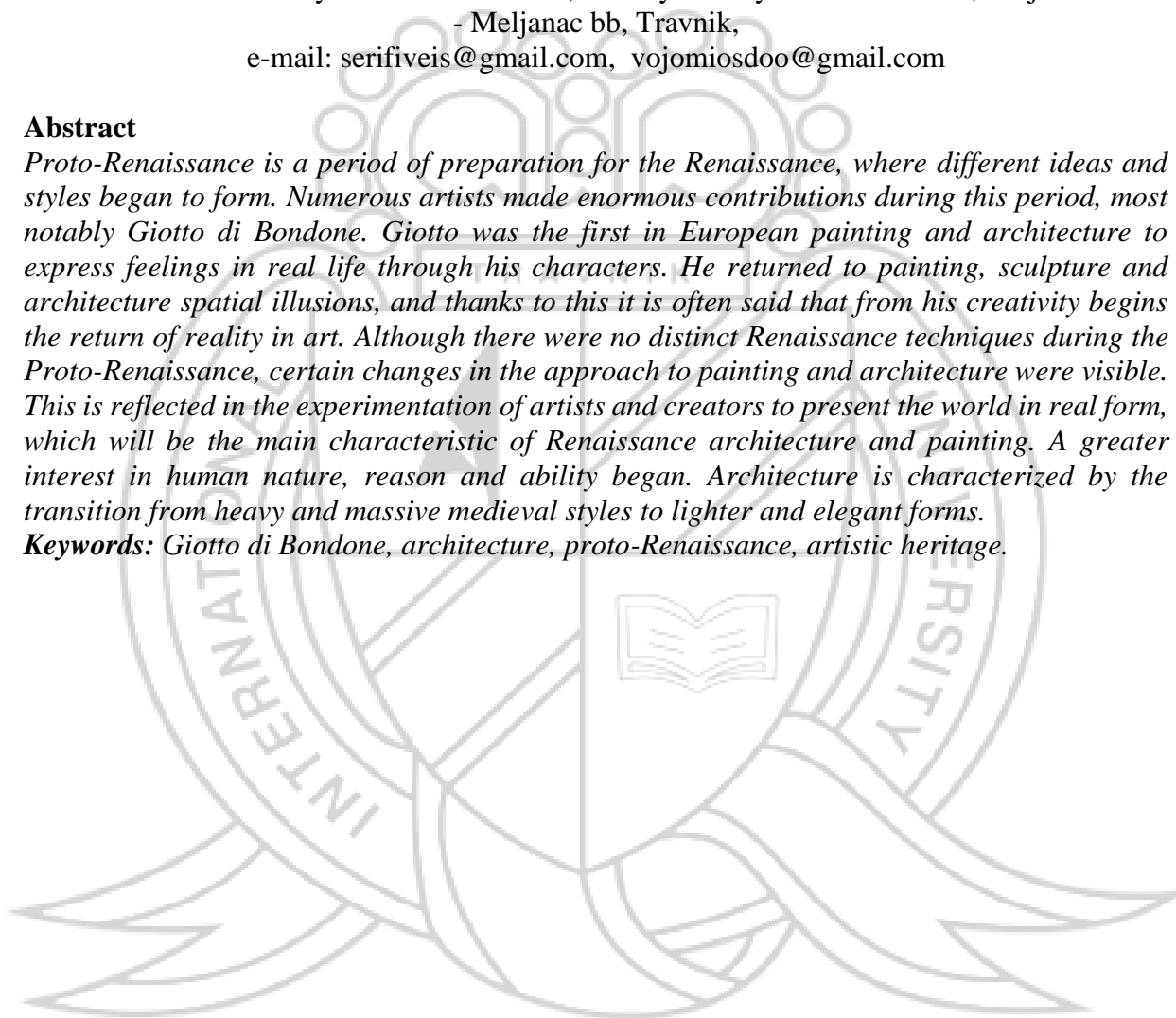
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Abstract

Proto-Renaissance is a period of preparation for the Renaissance, where different ideas and styles began to form. Numerous artists made enormous contributions during this period, most notably Giotto di Bondone. Giotto was the first in European painting and architecture to express feelings in real life through his characters. He returned to painting, sculpture and architecture spatial illusions, and thanks to this it is often said that from his creativity begins the return of reality in art. Although there were no distinct Renaissance techniques during the Proto-Renaissance, certain changes in the approach to painting and architecture were visible. This is reflected in the experimentation of artists and creators to present the world in real form, which will be the main characteristic of Renaissance architecture and painting. A greater interest in human nature, reason and ability began. Architecture is characterized by the transition from heavy and massive medieval styles to lighter and elegant forms.

Keywords: *Giotto di Bondone, architecture, proto-Renaissance, artistic heritage.*



1. INTRODUCTION

The Proto-Renaissance represents certain cultural and artistic changes that are the basis for the later flowering of the Renaissance, i.e. it is a transitional period during the 12th and 13th centuries, between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. During this period, artists and intellectuals encouraged the re-actualization and study of the classical culture of ancient Greece and Rome. Humanism prevailed and was the focus of the values and achievements of the human being, who were the center of attention. A greater interest in human nature, reason and ability began. Architecture is characterized by the transition from heavy and massive medieval styles to lighter and elegant forms. Which became the main motif and characteristic of Renaissance architecture.

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Proto-Renaissance is a period of preparation for the Renaissance, where different ideas and styles began to be formed. Many artists have made great contributions during this period. We will give an overview of one of the most important proto-Renaissance figures, Giotto di Bondone.

Giotto di Bondone (1266-1337) was an Italian painter, architect and sculptor. He belonged to the circle of artists from the epoch of proto-Renaissance (third party), he lived and worked at a time when the human mind was freed from the shackles of medieval obscurity. It is believed that his contribution is crucial in the development of this direction. He grew up as the son of a blacksmith in the vicinity of Florence. There is various controversy about his real name, some consider Giotto to be an abbreviation of Ambrogio or Angelo (Angeloto), while others think that Giotto is his real name.

His life and his creation are described in the list of "Commentarii" (stories about artists). There is talk of the poor conditions in which Giotto grew up, but the turn in his life takes place at the time when the painter Cimabue discovered his talent, while on the stone Giotto drew looking after sheep. As a boy, Giotto painted ants so faithfully that even the great Cimabue was astonished. This event resulted in Giotto soon becoming his disciple. Shortly thereafter, Giotto received his first offers in Florence, and Pope Benedict XII invited him to Rome, where he worked for 10 years. In the end, he became a famous architect and sculptor, but also a poet. His recognition was also affirmed in material success; He became an honorary citizen and owner of real estate in Florence and Rome.⁴³

His works are mostly with traditional religious motifs, but in each of them Giotto brought earthly life and life force. He was the first to align the scene of the painting and connect it to the viewer's space by lowering the image to the viewer's sight. The characters in his paintings stand firmly on the ground, are shaped and three-dimensionally rule space (which was not the case before). Giotto was the first in European painting to express his feelings in real life through his characters. He returned to painting spatial illusions, and thanks to this it is often said that from Giotto begins the return of reality in painting. His frescoes in the Capella del Arena in Padua mean a bold and almost radical break with the Byzantine tradition that was very strong in Italy. He got rid of large areas of gold on these frescoes, using instead the natural colors of

⁴³ https://www.znanje.org/i/i28/08iv04/08iv0417/biografija_djoto.htm

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objects – the local tone. Giotto, however, differentiates the local tone with light-dark to give objects and figures the volume and firmness of their shapes. With the volumes of figures and rocks he creates a stage, and therefore the event takes place in the foreground, in front of the observer, at the level of his gaze. Giotto's experiences will be followed by many painters of the early Renaissance. His appearance as a versatile artist marks the emergence of a new artistic expression "*arte moderna*".⁴⁴

Giovanni Boccaccio in the Decameron ("There is no such thing in nature that Giotto would not be able to display with his pencil or brush so close to the original that it would have its own appearance rather than the appearance of reproduction, often causing deception to the human eye into thinking it was a thing, not an image.") and Dante Alighieri in his "Divine Comedy", He was good friends with both of them. The poet Francesco Petrarca received a statue of the Mother of God from him. And Michelangelo was inspired by his work in the church of Santa Croce in Florence.

He died in 1337 while working on "Judgment Day" at Bargello Cathedral.

2. A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE ARTIST'S ACTIVITIES

Giotto is considered the originator of the Florentine school of painting. His name is one of the biggest names in art history according to the importance of the novelty it brings and the significance of its influence. It is believed that Giotto was the origin of the Italian Renaissance movement. The main works of Giotto are his frescoes, namely:

- In the Upper Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi,
- In the Palace of Podesta in Florence,
- In the Chapel of Santa Maria del Arena in Padua,
- In the Lower Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi,
- In the church of Santa Croce in Florence,
- Roman frescoes and mosaics and various altar paintings.

Giotto began his solo painting career in the Upper Basilica in Assisi (1288-1292). It was here in the 28th scene that he told the life of St. Francis. These frescoes are painted in the zone under the window. Contemporaries were amazed by the originality of these paintings and their realism. The characters and gestures were natural, clear and simplistic.

The most important frescoes of Giotto are in the Arena in Padua. These are scenes representing the life of the Mother of God, the life and suffering of Christ, then the terrible judgment, Christ in glory, and 14 allegorical figures representing virtues and vices.

His last frescoes are in the church of Santa Croce in Florence, scenes from the life of St. Francis of Assisi.⁴⁵

Giotto worked for the Bardi and Peruzzi (two cycles of frescoes depicting John the Evangelist and John the Baptist), Florentine families who had the most important European banks in the 13th century. He worked in the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, which at that time was the most important church of Christianity, he worked for the Pope, for the richest and most influential citizen of Padua (Scrovegni), for the chapel and main altar of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, for the King of Neapolitan and for Azone Viscontius, lord of Milan. At a time when Italy's remarkable economic expansion has transformed every Italian city into a cultural center with specific characteristics and a potential art school, Giotto has placed himself in a super-regional position, becoming a universal reference point. If we look at the content of his artistic

⁴⁴ <https://pulse.rs/dotov-diavolo/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.scribd.com/doc/104560637/ISTORIJA-UMETNOSTI-2>

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revolution, we must agree that the first manifestations are present in the decoration of the Upper Basilica in Assisi. It is very likely that Giotto worked in Assisi ten years earlier than in Padua. The concept of space first formulated in Assisi was known to the Greeks and Romans, but was lost in medieval times. It wasn't just a new way of painting. The idea of an illusory reconstruction of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface also implies that reality perceived through the senses acquires a new artistic meaning.

The decoration of the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua (between 1303-1305) was universally recognized as Giotto's most important creation and one of the main events in the history of European painting. The decorations of the Lower Basilica of Assisi, the Chapels of Peruzzi and Bardi (after 1317) also illustrated Giotto's radical innovations. In 1329-1333 he worked in Naples for King Robert of Anjou, in 1335 he worked in Milan for Visconti.⁴⁶

The last work he worked on was the bell tower in Florence, which today bears the name Giotto's bell tower in his honor. Unfortunately, it did not live to see the completion of its construction.

3. THE MOST IMPORTANT WORK WITH A SHORT ANALYSIS

Giotto di Bondone celebrated the grandiose work he did in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, known as the Arena Chapel. He worked in this chapel from 1304 to 1306 and created the most important cycle of frescoes.

3.1. Slaughter of innocents

A famous fresco from this cycle is "The Slaughter of the Innocents" which tells the eternal tragedy of violence (Figure 1).

The fresco "Slaughter of the Innocents" depicts a modernized gospel event, relocated from Palestine to Tuscany in the 14th century, to a typical medieval city. Two buildings in the typically Tuscan Romanesque style define the space relative to the background of the cobalt blue sky that replaces the golden backgrounds of Byzantine icons. Giotto arranges the characters within a limited space, and emphasizes the plasticity of the body with the folds of the clothes. On the right is a group of women mourning their murdered children. Their faces reflect distraughtness. In the middle is an executioner who is characterized by incredible expressive power. He kidnaps the child from his mother's arms, but pauses in his cruel act to increase his painful anxiety of carnage. The soldier behind him cruelly kidnaps the child from the mother. In front of the soldiers stand a bunch of children's corpses.

⁴⁶ <https://web.archive.org/web/20060419031702/http://www.christusrex.org/www1/francis/index.html>

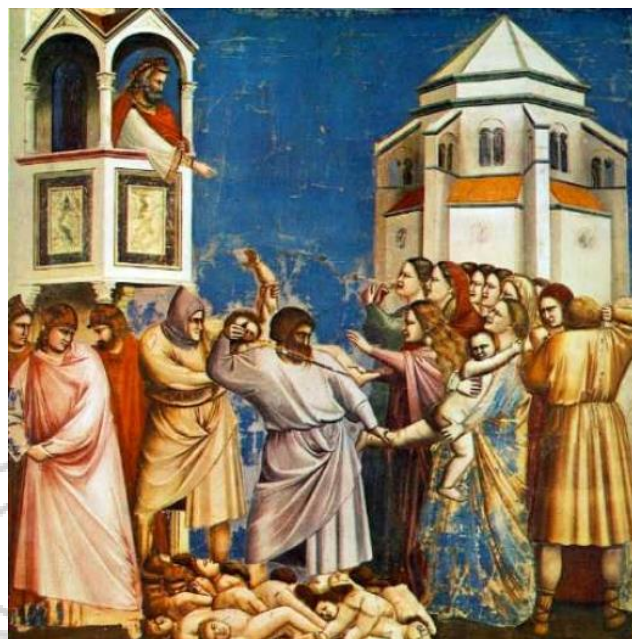


Figure 1 - *"Slaughter of the Innocents", Giotto di Bondone, fresco in Skrovegnia, Padua*

With a drawing that simplifies forms and makes them readable even from a distance, Giotto di Bondone strongly conjures up the tragedy of violence. Thus, the fresco "Slaughter of the Innocents" becomes a universal protest against violence.⁴⁷

3.2. Entry into Jerusalem

In the middle zone of the left wall, in the penultimate place towards the arch is the fresco "Entering Jerusalem", which is part of an almost cinematic series of paintings covering the walls of the chapel talking about the life of the Virgin Mary, as well as the life of Jesus Christ in beautiful shining colors that are still remarkably preserved (Figure 2).

On this fresco, the landscape and figures are reduced to the essential, evocative conveying at the same time narrative feeling and emotions. Giotto di Bondone tried to simplify his composition, without additional elements, only essentially. He balances the building to the right with a boy climbing a tree. Jesus Christ connects two sides of the fresco. Giotto draws the attention of the viewer to the main figure of the fresco story in various ways. The figure of Jesus Christ riding on a donkey is the largest figure in the whole fresco and is located in the center of the composition. Christ's clothes are completely blue, and his head is surrounded by a clear blue sky and placed between vertical lines of slightly growing trees, and an accentuated line indicating him was created by an ass and a crowd of people coming out of the gate of Jerusalem. In addition, Jesus is painted with a kind of three-dimensional reality so powerful that it looks as very tangible, like a sculpture in a circle. And the donkey plays a special role in this fresco. Relatively large and in the very center of the fresco he progresses calmly and obediently. With eyes full of goodness and intelligence, he is obviously, unlike the apostles and the crowd, fully aware of what is happening.

⁴⁷ <http://www.artnit.net/paleta/item/585-%C4%91oto-di-bondone-pokolj-nevinih.html>

Figure 2 - *"Entering Jerusalem", Giotto di Bondone, fresco in Skrovegnia, Padua*



It seems that the apostles on the left side of this fresco are stuck and only the faces of the four of them can be seen, and the other eight of the twelve apostles are hinted at with the tips of the heads, hands and rich golden halos. They stand behind Jesus Christ shoulder to shoulder, creating a solid mass and looking cautiously at the audience. Having heard three times from Jesus that he would be arrested and killed in Jerusalem, they no doubt feared for him and for themselves. The audience that greets Jesus is quite different. It includes both men and women and there is a space around them and can be clearly seen every person and every face. There is a great sense of movement and action as people come out of the city gates to greet this coming king. Boys in trees tear branches from olive trees, one man lays his coat on the road, an improvised "red carpet" that marks the arrival of a great official, while others pull their robes or wave palm branches.⁴⁸

3.3. Giot's bell tower in Florence

1334 . The construction of the bell tower in Florence, on the square of the cathedral, began. The Cathedral of Santa Maria de la Fiore was not yet fully completed, while the Baptistery of St. John had its final appearance for many years. The religious center of the city at that time was slowly gaining the spectacular aspect of the cinematic world that we know today, but some of its main elements were still missing. To direct the construction site of the bell tower, the Opera del Duomo, the cathedral's leading board, invited the artist who at the time was probably the most authoritative -- Giotto.

The construction of the bell tower lasted for the next 25 years. Giotto, unfortunately, was involved in the construction of only the first three years. He died in 1337 and did not live to see the final appearance of the bell tower (Figure 3). This bell tower is called Giot's Bell Tower, which is a sign of the special affection that the city has for this spectacular protagonist of art of all time.

⁴⁸ <http://www.artnit.net/paleta/item/4535-%C4%91oto-di-bondone-ulazak-u-jerusalim.html>



Figure 3 – Giot's bell tower in Florence

Giotto has devoted himself so much to the bell tower that it is a negligible position in the cathedral, which has also been entrusted to him in the meantime. Giotto shows special attention to architecture and in his paintings, and now he had the opportunity to concretize it on this project. The images of cities, towers, castles and defensive walls are not simply set as a background, but as true spatial compositions, unforgettable because of their vivid and intense colors.

As for the bell tower, Giotto did a truly ambitious project: Dominant in the market and aligned with the facade of the cathedral, the tower was supposed to rise 115 meters above the city, which was a record for that time. But in 1337, at the time of the artist's death, the bell tower was just a massive square pedestal reinforced in corners with solid pillars. Giot's touch is, nevertheless, recognizable wherever you look – in the white, red and green marble cover and in the magnificent figurative cycle of its ornaments.

One of the many legends that developed in the artist's life says that Giotto died of the pain he suffered after realizing that he had made the walls of the bell tower too thin; in fact, when Andrea Pisano took over the direction of the works, he discovered that he had to address certain serious structural flaws: The base was really not dense enough to support the tower even half the height required in the original design. Written in this way, he came up with an ingenious solution, placing halls in higher levels not on the walls, but on the vaulted ceiling of the hallway below. He also set up two steps in the central well instead of carving space into the walls, which would weaken them too much.⁴⁹ In this way, the construction of the bell tower was successfully completed and it still bears Jot's name today.

⁴⁹ <https://www.italyguides.it/en/tuscany/florence/santa-maria-del-fiore/giotto-s-bell-tower>

3.4. Bridge "Ponte Carraia"

The frescoes in the chapels of the Florentine church of Santa Croce have been partially preserved, while in Rome and Naples they have completely collapsed. In addition to frescoes, he painted in tempera and oil on a board, and painted crucifixes in which he is closer to traditional solutions (Madonna in glory). In addition to the bell tower, he designed the Bridge "Ponte Carraya" (Fig. 4) and modernized the city walls. He almost no doubt painted "Ognissanti Madonna" (currently in Ufizi, Florence). In Rome, Giotto is believed to have created a mosaic of "Christ walking on water" above the entrance to St. Peter's Church and an altar in the Vatican Museum.

Other important works of Giotto include the dissolution of "Sta Maria Novella", completed sometime in the 1290s and the colorful fresco painting cycle of St. John the Baptist, completed in 1320.⁵⁰



Figure 4 - Ponte Carraia Bridge

Cycles of Frescoes in the lower and upper Basilica of St. Francis and in Skrovenja are preserved and still available to all art lovers. There are 138 frescoes from all cycles, which can be divided into several series: Scenes from the Life of Christ (22), Scenes from the Life of Joachim (6), The Life of St. John the Baptist (3), The Legend of St. John the Baptist (3). Francis (13), The Life of St. John the Evangelist (3), The Seven Virtues (7), The Life of St. Francis (1), The Seven Vices (6), Scenes from the Old Testament (2), Scenes from the New Testament (1), Scenes from the Life of St. Francis (5), The Legend of Saint Francis (13) and Scenes from the Life of the Virgin (5). All frescoes are available on the site <https://www.wikiart.org/en/giotto> with a very good photo resolution and the ability to order a reproduction of some of the frescoes. As for the frescoes themselves, among them there are 14 allegorical images, which are found in the series Seven Vices and Seven Virtues. In these paintings are strikingly represented despair, envy, discord, infidelity, injustice, anger, mercy, faith, foolishness, hope, strength, justice, prudence, moderation. They are the most important ones to see the size of The Odds. Among the preserved frescoes are frescoes in bardi's and Peruzzi's chapels in Florence, the church of Santa Croce.

⁵⁰ <https://bs.eferit.com/giotto-di-bondone/>

His other works are in museums: the Louvre (Paris), Uffizi (Florence), the Vatican Gallery (Vatican), the Berlin Museum (Gema DeGale), the Horna (Florence), the Metropolitan (New York), and the National Art Gallery in Washington.

In the Louvre there is a painting by Giot, which represents three scenes from the legend of St. George. Francis made with tempera on the board.

The artist's last Great Exhibition was held in 1937, at the time of Mussolini, when it was 600 years since his death. In 2009 (from March to June) a multimedia exhibition was held in the Roman complex Vitoriano. It contained more than 150 of Giotto's most important works and pointed to his importance and the crucial influence he had during the period in which he created. The last multimedia exhibition of Giotto's works was held a little more recently, in 2018.⁵¹ This exhibition blended medieval art and contemporary technology and enabled a perfect introduction to Giotto's works. In order to share the experience of visitors who go live to see the frescoes whose author has transferred the unusual artist to others, an exhibition project has been designed that uses suggestive depictions, and even with the music of jazz artist Paolo Fresu.

Judging by the multitude of websites and information related to Giotto di Bondone and his work, his works still deserve attention and this artist lives through them.

4. CONCLUSION

Giotto di Bondone was an artist who introduced a series of novelties, primarily in the notion of art, and thanks to him, artists reached their full splendor and began to enjoy certain privileges after a period of eclipse of the human mind. His life path, which is described in "Comentaria"s, attracts attention the most. The spontaneity of an event that changed the course of his life is fascinating. The beginnings of creativity are related to Cimabue, who recognized Giot's talent and thus enabled us to enjoy his colorful works.

As for the media representation of Giotto's works, it is necessary to create a website that would unite all his works in one place, such as a virtual solo exhibition (including his architectural achievements and information about them). On the site, visitors could express their personal impression of the works through comments, something resembling literary dinners, where each individual would be able to present their observations and perhaps the results of the research on that site. It would be interesting to talk about the different details of his work and the emotions that arose in the observer. This would be especially interesting among student groups, and they would learn a lot through entertainment.

On the [website of the https://pulse.rs/dotov-diavolo/](https://pulse.rs/dotov-diavolo/) were posted all 28 frescoes from the cycle "Life and Death of St. Peter. Francis of Assisi", which is very interesting. One can single out an article published by rts portal (<https://www.rts.rs/page/magazine/sr/story/2523/nauka/3052646/djotov-univerzum.html>) entitled "Giot's Universe", where affinities, achievements and the most important Works of Giot are described, and Giotto himself is presented with "a harbinger of radical changes in painting and perception of man of the new age". This phrase leaves a special impression.

The website that most realistically shows Giot's bell tower in Florence, where by moving the mouse, you can see the different corners of the bell tower (<https://www.italyguides.it/en/tuscany/florence/santa-maria-del-fiore/giotto-s-bell-tower>).

The site, which unites 155 of Giotto's most important works, is available at the link <https://www.freeart.com/gallery/g/giotto/giotto.html>.

⁵¹ <https://www.culturenet.hr/default.aspx?id=87326>

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