

Jan van Eyck, *Arnolfini Wedding*, 1434



****First Question First****

What is *your* immediate reaction to this artwork?

Trust it. Write about it. Use the guide sheet for help.

Continue reading for another perspective and journal questions.

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Objects have meaning. In art, this symbolic value we place on things is called iconography. So, a candle in a painting may not just be a candle, providing light for the scene. It can also act as a reminder of life's transience, our days ending as quickly as extinguishing a flame. Or, as in Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Wedding*, the one lit candle above representing the presence of Christ; the couple goes shoeless underscoring the sacred ground upon which they take their matrimonial oath.

Iconography can be both cultural *and* personal. Each one of us attaches symbolic meaning to our own belongings. Some objects are imbued with sentimental significance while others can act more as spiritual or philosophical talisman, helping to guide our lives. Our collection of hearts in all their limitless colors and textures may, for example, remind us of our universe of love. Photos or paintings of bridges, pathways, or portals may help bring us into awareness of the journey aspect of life as we go through arduous times. We may have religious figures in glass, wood, or polymer placed in our home, their presence serving to calm. Our personal iconography serves us. When our grief leaves us feeling disoriented or in pain, our symbolic objects can help steady and comfort us with their lifetime of meaning given from our own wisdom. They are gifts we give to ourselves.

Q.) What object(s) in your home have you been drawn to? What is its symbolic meaning to you? And is that meaning changing? How is it helping you gain perspective on your loss?