

Italian High Renaissance

The Italian Renaissance was the earliest manifestation of the general European Renaissance, a period of great cultural change and achievement that began in Italy during the 14th century (Trecento) and lasted until the 17th century (Seicento), marking the transition between Medieval and Modern Europe. The French word renaissance (Rinascimento in Italian) means "Rebirth" and defines the period as one of renewed interest in the culture of classical antiquity after the centuries labeled the Dark Ages by Renaissance humanists, as well as an era of economic revival after the Black Death of 1348. The Renaissance author Giorgio Vasari used the term "Rebirth" in his *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* but the concept became widespread only in the 19th century, after the works of scholars such as Jules Michelet and Jacob Burckhardt.

This article deals with the three greatest artists of the Italian Renaissance: **Leonardo**, **Michelangelo** and **Raphael**. As they lived at the same time, and each would have known the work of the others, their lives and works are treated in parallel. Leonardo was the eldest and would have been around 43 when Michelangelo was producing his first works. Raphael was eight years younger than Michelangelo, but was astonishingly precocious, producing his first altarpieces in his late teens. He died (according to Vasari) of a fever, brought on by a night of excessive sex, on his 37th birthday.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452 – 1519), was an Italian polymath whose areas of interest included invention, painting, sculpting, architecture, science, music, mathematics, engineering, literature, anatomy, geology, astronomy, botany, writing, history, and cartography. He has been variously called the father of palaeontology, iconology, and architecture, and is widely considered one of the greatest painters of all time. Sometimes credited with the inventions of the parachute, helicopter and tank, his genius epitomised the Renaissance humanist ideal.

Many historians and scholars regard Leonardo as the prime exemplar of the "Universal Genius" or "Renaissance Man", an individual of "unquenchable curiosity" and "feverishly inventive imagination". According to art historian Helen Gardner, the scope and depth of his interests were without precedent in recorded history, and "his mind and personality seem to us superhuman, while the man himself mysterious and remote". While there is much speculation regarding his life and personality, his view of the world was logical rather than mysterious, and the empirical methods he employed were unorthodox for his time.

Born out of wedlock to a notary, Piero da Vinci, and a peasant woman, Caterina, in Vinci in the region of Florence, Leonardo was educated in the studio of the renowned Florentine painter Andrea del Verrocchio. Much of his earlier working life was spent in the service of Ludovico il Moro in Milan. He later worked in Rome, Bologna and Venice, and he spent his last years in France at the home awarded to him by Francis I.

Leonardo was, and is, renowned primarily as a painter. Among his works, the Mona Lisa is the most famous and most parodied portrait and *The Last Supper* the most reproduced religious painting of all time. Leonardo's drawing of the Vitruvian Man is also regarded as a cultural icon, being reproduced on items as varied as the euro coin, textbooks, and T-shirts. Perhaps fifteen of his paintings have survived. Nevertheless, these few works, together with his notebooks, which contain drawings, scientific diagrams, and his thoughts on the nature of painting, compose a contribution to later generations of artists rivalled only by that of his contemporary, Michelangelo.

Leonardo is revered for his technological ingenuity. He conceptualised flying machines, a type of armoured fighting vehicle, concentrated solar power, an adding machine, the first known chain driven bicycle and the double hull, also outlining a rudimentary theory of plate tectonics. Relatively few of his designs were constructed or were even feasible during his lifetime, but some of his smaller inventions, such as an automated bobbin winder and a machine for testing the tensile strength of wire, entered the world of manufacturing unheralded. A number of Leonardo's most practical inventions are nowadays displayed as working models at the Museum of Vinci. He made substantial discoveries in anatomy, civil engineering, optics, and hydrodynamics, but he did not publish his findings and they had no direct influence on later science.

Today, Leonardo is widely recognized as one of the most diversely talented individuals ever to have lived.



Leonardo, Arno Valley 1473

His earliest dated drawing is a Landscape of the Arno Valley, 1473, which shows the river, the mountains, Montelupo Castle and the farmlands beyond it in great detail.

Verrocchio's workshop, 1466–76

In 1466, at the age of fourteen, Leonardo was apprenticed as a garzone (studio boy) to Andrea del Verrocchio, the leading Florentine painter and sculptor of his day, whose workshop was "one of the finest in Florence".

Florence, at the time of Leonardo's youth, was the centre of Christian Humanist thought and culture. Other famous painters apprenticed or associated with the workshop include Domenico Ghirlandaio, Perugino, Botticelli, and Lorenzo di Credi. Leonardo would have been exposed to both theoretical training and a vast range of technical skills, including drafting, chemistry, metallurgy, metal working, plaster casting, leather working, mechanics and carpentry as well as the artistic skills of drawing, painting, sculpting and modelling.

Much of the painted production of Verrocchio's workshop was done by his employees. According to Vasari, Leonardo collaborated with Verrocchio on his *The Baptism of Christ*, painting the young angel holding Jesus' robe in a manner that was so far superior to his master's that Verrocchio put down his brush and never painted again. On close examination, the painting reveals much that has been painted or touched-up over the tempera using the new technique of oil paint, with the landscape, the rocks that can be seen through the brown mountain stream and much of the figure of Jesus bearing witness to the hand of Leonardo.



Leonardo, Baptism 1472-75

By 1472, at the age of twenty, Leonardo qualified as a master in the Guild of Saint Luke, the guild of artists and doctors of medicine, but even after his father set him up in his own workshop, his attachment to Verrocchio was such that he continued to collaborate with him. Leonardo's earliest known dated work is a drawing in pen and ink of the Arno valley, drawn on 5 August 1473.



Leonardo, Adoration of the Magi 1481

In January 1478, he received his first of two independent commissions: to paint an altarpiece for the Chapel of St. Bernard in the Palazzo Vecchio and, in March 1481, *The Adoration of the Magi* for the monks of San Donato a Scopeto. Neither commission was completed, the second being interrupted when Leonardo went to Milan.

The Virgin Mary and Child are depicted in the foreground and form a triangular shape with the Magi kneeling in adoration. Behind them is a semicircle of accompanying figures, including what may be a self-portrait of the young Leonardo (on the far right). In the background on the left is the ruin of a pagan building, on which workmen can be seen, apparently repairing it. On the right are men on horseback fighting and a sketch of a rocky landscape.

The ruins are a possible reference to the Basilica of Maxentius, which, according to Medieval legend, the Romans claimed would stand until a virgin gave birth. It is supposed to have collapsed on the night of Christ's birth (in fact it was not even built until a later date). The ruins dominate a preparatory perspective drawing by Leonardo, which also includes the fighting horsemen. The palm tree in the centre has associations with the Virgin Mary, partly due to the phrase "You are stately as a palm tree" from the Song of Solomon, which is believed to prefigure her. Another aspect of the palm tree can be the usage of the palm tree as a symbol of victory for ancient Rome, whereas in Christianity it is a representation of martyrdom—triumph over death—so in conclusion we can say that the palm in general represents triumph. The other tree in the painting is from the carob family, the seeds from the tree are used as a unit of measurement. They measure valuable stones and jewels. This tree and its seeds are associated with crowns, suggesting Christ as the king of kings or the Virgin as the future queen of heaven, as well as that this is nature's gift to the new born Christ. As with Michelangelo's Doni Tondo, the background is probably supposed to represent the Pagan world supplanted by the Christian world, as inaugurated by the events in the foreground. The artist uses bright colours to illuminate the figures in the foreground of the painting. Jesus and the Virgin Mary are, in fact, painted yellow, the color of light. It is also interesting how the trees are painted blue, an unusual colour for trees of any kind. On the right side the most credible self-portrait of Leonardo da Vinci as a 30-year-old can be seen, according to several critics.

Much of the composition of this painting was influenced by an earlier work of the Northern artist Rogier van der Weyden. The relationship between figures, space and the viewer's standpoint, the high horizon, slightly raised viewpoint, space receding into the far distance, and a central figural group poised before a rock formation in the middle of the landscape are all copied from van der Weyden's *Entombment of Christ* (1460, Uffizi Gallery, Italy).



Leonardo,
Virgin of the Rocks
1483- 86
Louvre, Paris

The Virgin of the Rocks (sometimes *The Madonna of the Rocks*) is the name of two paintings by Leonardo da Vinci, of the same subject, and of a composition which is identical except for several significant details. The version generally considered the earlier of the two, hangs in The Louvre in Paris and the other in the National Gallery, London. The paintings are both nearly 2 metres (over 6 feet) high and are painted in oils. Both paintings show the Madonna and child Jesus with the infant John the Baptist and an angel, in a rocky setting which gives the paintings their usual name. The significant compositional differences are in the gaze and right hand of the angel. There are many minor ways in which the works differ, including the colours, the lighting, the flora, and the way in which sfumato has been used.



Leonardo,
Virgin of the Rocks
1503-06
National Gallery, London

Subject matter

The subject of the two paintings is the adoration of the Christ child by the infant John the Baptist. This subject relates to a non-Biblical event which became part of the medieval tradition of the holy family's journey into Egypt. The Gospel of Matthew relates that Joseph, the husband of Mary, was warned in a dream that King Herod would attempt to kill the child Jesus, and that he was to take the child and his mother and flee to safety.

The subject of the Virgin Mary with the Christ child being adored by John the Baptist was common in the art of Renaissance Florence. John the Baptist is the patron saint of Florence and has often been depicted in the art of that city. In both paintings the scene is depicted taking place against a

background of rock formations. While scenes of the Nativity were sometimes depicted as taking place in a cave, and Kenneth Clark points to the existence of an earlier rocky landscape in an adoration painted for the Medici family by Fra Filippo Lippi, the setting was unprecedented and gave to the paintings their usual name of the Virgin of the Rocks.

Composition

The two paintings of the Virgin of the Rocks, are the same in subject matter and in overall composition, indicating that one is derivative of the other. The two paintings differ in compositional details, in colour, in lighting and in the handling of the paint. Both paintings show a grouping of four figures, the Virgin Mary, the Christ child, the infant John the Baptist and an angel arranged into a triangular composition within the painting and set against a background of rocks, and a distant landscape of mountains and water. In both paintings, Mary makes the apex of the pyramidal figure group, stretching one hand to include John and raising the other above the head of the Christ child in a blessing. John kneels, gazing towards the Christ child with his hands together in an attitude of prayer. The Christ child sits towards the front of the painting, supported by the angel, and raising his right hand in a sign of Benediction towards the kneeling John.

Differences

Compositionally, all the figures are slightly larger in the London painting than in the Louvre painting. The main compositional difference between the two paintings is that while in the London painting, the angel's right hand rests on his/her knee, in the Louvre painting the hand is raised, the index finger pointing at John. The eyes of the angel are turned down in a contemplative manner in

the London painting, but in the Louvre picture are turned to gaze in the general direction of the viewer. In the London painting, all the forms are more defined, including the bodily forms of the clothed figures. The rocks are painted in meticulous detail, while the forms of the background in the painting in the Louvre are all more hazy. The contrast between light and shade on the figures and faces in the London painting are all much sharper. The faces and forms in the Louvre painting are more delicately painted and subtly blurred by sfumato. The lighting in the Louvre painting is softer and appears warmer, but this may be the result of the tone of the varnish on the surface. In keeping with their conservative handling of Leonardo's works, the Louvre version has not undergone significant restoration or cleaning. The Louvre painting remains much as it was in 1939 when Kenneth Clark lamented that "We can form no real conception of the colour, the values, or the general tone of the original, buried as it is under layer upon layer of thick yellow varnish. In the darks some mixture of bitumen has made the surface cake and crack like mud, and there are innumerable patches of old repaint all over the picture. All this must be borne in mind before we say that at this date Leonardo was a dark painter and an uninteresting colourist."

Another difference is in the colouring of the robes, particularly those of the angel. The London painting contains no red, while in the Louvre painting, the angel is robed in bright red and green, with the robes arranged differently from those of the angel in London. The London version contains traditional attributes missing from the Louvre version, the haloes and John's traditional cruciform reed staff. The details of the flowers are also quite different in the two paintings, with those in the Louvre painting being botanically accurate, and those in the London painting being fanciful creations.



The *Lady With an Ermine* is one of only four portraits of women painted by Leonardo. It shows a half-length figure, the body of a woman turned at a three-quarter angle toward her right, but with her face turned toward her left. Her gaze is directed neither straight ahead, nor toward the viewer, but toward a "third party" beyond the picture's frame. In her arms, Cecilia Gallerani (who was the mistress of Leonardo's employer, Ludovico Sforza) holds a small white-coated stoat, known as an ermine. Gallerani's dress is comparatively simple, revealing that she is not a noblewoman. Her coiffure, known as a coazone, confines her hair smoothly to her head with two bands of hair bound on either side of her face and a long plait at the back. Her hair is held in place by a fine gauze veil with a woven border of gold-wound threads, a black band, and a sheath over the plait.

Leonardo, *Lady With an Ermine* 1483-90

There are several interpretations of the significance of the ermine in her portrait. The ermine, a stoat in its winter coat, was a traditional symbol of purity because it was believed an ermine would face death rather than soil its white coat. In his old age, Leonardo compiled a bestiary in which he recorded: The ermine out of moderation never eats but once a day, and it would rather let itself be captured by hunters than take refuge in a dirty lair, in order not to stain its purity. Ermines were kept as pets by the aristocracy and their white pelts were used to line or trim aristocratic garments. As in many of Leonardo's paintings, the composition comprises a pyramidal spiral and the sitter is caught in the motion of turning to her left, reflecting Leonardo's lifelong preoccupation with the dynamics of movement. The three-quarter profile portrait was one of his many innovations, poised as if listening to an unseen speaker.

This work in particular shows Leonardo's expertise in painting the human form. The outstretched hand of Cecilia was painted with great detail. Leonardo paints every contour of each fingernail, each wrinkle around her knuckles, and even the flexing of the tendon in her bent finger.

The model, Lisa del Giocondo, was a member of the Gherardini family of Florence and Tuscany, and the wife of wealthy Florentine silk merchant Francesco del Giocondo. The painting is thought to have been commissioned for their new home, and to celebrate the birth of their second son. The Italian name for the painting, *La Gioconda*, means "jocund" ("happy" or "jovial") or, literally, "the jocund one", a pun on the feminine form of Lisa's married name, "Giocondo". In French, the title *La Joconde* has the same meaning.

The woman sits markedly upright in a "pozzetto" armchair with her arms folded, a sign of her reserved posture. Her gaze is fixed on the observer. The woman appears alive to an unusual extent, which Leonardo achieved by his method of not drawing outlines (*sfumato*). The soft blending creates an ambiguous mood "mainly in two features: the corners of the mouth, and the corners of the eyes".



Leonardo, *La Gioconda (Mona Lisa)* 1479-1528.

Detail of Lisa's hands, her right hand resting on her left. Leonardo chose this gesture rather than a wedding ring to depict Lisa as a virtuous woman and faithful wife. The painting was one of the first portraits to depict the sitter in front of an imaginary landscape, and Leonardo was one of the first painters to use aerial perspective. The enigmatic woman is portrayed seated in what appears to be an open loggia with dark pillar bases on either side. Behind her, a vast landscape recedes to icy mountains. Winding paths and a distant bridge give only the slightest indications of human presence. Leonardo has chosen to place the horizon line not at the neck, as he did with *Ginevra de' Benci*, but on a level with the eyes, thus linking the figure with the landscape and emphasizing the mysterious nature of the painting.



The painting (housed in the refectory of the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan) represents the scene of the Last Supper of Jesus with his apostles, as it is told in the Gospel of John, 13:21.

Leonardo, *Last Supper* 1494-99

The Last Supper specifically portrays the reaction given by each apostle when Jesus said one of them would betray him. All twelve apostles have different reactions to the news, with various degrees of anger and shock. The apostles are identified from a manuscript (The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci p. 232) with their names found in the 19th century. From left to right, according to the apostles' heads: Bartholomew, James, son of Alphaeus, and Andrew form a group of three; all are surprised. Judas Iscariot, Peter, and John form another group of three.

Description

Judas is wearing green and blue and is in shadow, looking rather withdrawn and taken aback by the sudden revelation of his plan. He is clutching a small bag, perhaps signifying the silver given to him as payment to betray Jesus, or perhaps a reference to his role within the 12 disciples as treasurer. He is also tipping over the salt cellar. This may be related to the near-Eastern expression to "betray the salt" meaning to betray one's Master. He is the only person to have his elbow on the table and his head is also horizontally the lowest of anyone in the painting. Peter looks angry and is holding a knife pointed away from Christ, perhaps foreshadowing his violent reaction in Gethsemane during Jesus' arrest. The youngest apostle, John, appears to swoon. Jesus Apostle Thomas, James the Greater, and Philip are the next group of three. Thomas is clearly upset; the raised index finger foreshadows his incredulity of the Resurrection. James the Greater looks stunned, with his arms in the air. Meanwhile, Philip appears to be requesting some explanation. Matthew, Jude Thaddeus, and Simon the Zealot are the final group of three. Both Jude Thaddeus and Matthew are turned toward Simon, perhaps to find out if he has any answer to their initial questions. In common with other depictions of the Last Supper from this period, Leonardo seats the diners on one side of the table, so that none of them has his back to the viewer. Most previous depictions excluded Judas by placing him alone on the opposite side of the table from the other eleven disciples and Jesus, or placing halos around all the disciples except Judas. Leonardo instead has Judas lean back into shadow. Jesus is predicting that his betrayer will take the bread at the same time he does to Saints Thomas and James to his left, who react in horror as Jesus points with his left hand to a piece of bread before them. Distracted by the conversation between John and Peter, Judas reaches for a different piece of bread not noticing Jesus too stretching out with his right hand towards it (Matthew 26: 23). The angles and lighting draw attention to Jesus, whose turned right cheek is located at the vanishing point for all perspective lines; his hands are located at the golden ratio of half the height of the composition. The painting contains several references to the number 3, which represents the Christian belief in the Holy Trinity. The Apostles are seated in groupings of three; there are three windows behind Jesus; and the shape of Jesus' figure resembles a triangle. The painting can also be interpreted using the Fibonacci series: 1 table, 1 central figure, 2 side walls, 3 windows and figures grouped in threes, 5 groups of figures, 8 panels on the walls and 8 table legs, and 13 individual figures. There may have been other references that have since been lost as the painting deteriorated.

Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni (1475 – 1564), was an Italian sculptor, painter, architect, poet, and engineer of the High Renaissance who exerted an unparalleled influence on the development of Western art. Considered to be the greatest living artist during his lifetime (called 'il divino') he has since also been described as one of the greatest artists of all time. Despite making few forays beyond the arts, his versatility in the disciplines he took up was of such a high order that he is often considered a contender for the title of the archetypal Renaissance man, along with his fellow Italian Leonardo da Vinci.

His output in every field of interest was prodigious; given the sheer volume of surviving correspondence, sketches, and reminiscences taken into account, he is the best-documented artist of the 16th century.

Bacchus is depicted with rolling eyes, his staggering body almost teetering off the rocky outcrop on which he stands. Sitting behind him is a faun, who eats the bunch of grapes slipping out of Bacchus's left hand. With its swollen breast and abdomen, the Bacchus figure suggested to Giorgio Vasari "both the slenderness of a young man and the fleshiness and roundness of a woman", and its androgynous quality has often been noted (although the testicles are swollen as well).



**Michelangelo,
Bacchus 1496-97**

The inspiration for the work appears to be the description in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* of a lost bronze sculpture by Praxiteles, depicting "Bacchus, Drunkenness and a satyr" The sense of precariousness resulting from a high centre of gravity can be found in a number of later works by the artist, most notably the David and the figures on the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

Bacchus wears a wreath of ivy leaves, as that plant was sacred to the god. (They are not, as is often supposed, vine leaves.) In his right hand he holds a goblet of wine and in his left the skin of a tiger, an animal associated with the god "for its love of the grape". The hand holding the goblet was broken off and the penis chiseled away before Maarten van Heemskerck saw the sculpture in the 1530s. Only the goblet was restored, in the early 1550s. The mutilation may have been to give the sculpture an illusion of greater antiquity, placed as it initially was among an antique torso and fragmentary Roman reliefs in Jacopo Galli's Roman garden.



This famous work of art depicts the body of Jesus on the lap of his mother Mary after the Crucifixion. The theme is of Northern origin. Michelangelo's interpretation of the Pietà is unprecedented in Italian sculpture. It is an important work as it balances the Renaissance ideals of classical beauty with naturalism.

The structure is pyramidal, and the vertex coincides with Mary's head. The statue widens progressively down the drapery of Mary's dress, to the base, the rock of Golgotha. The figures are quite out of proportion, owing to the difficulty of depicting a fully-grown man cradled full-length in a woman's lap. Much of Mary's body is concealed by her monumental drapery, and the relationship of the figures appears quite natural.

Michelangelo, *Pietà* 1498-99

Michelangelo's interpretation of the Pietà was far different from those previously created by other artists, as he sculpted a young and beautiful Mary rather than an older woman around 50 years of age. The marks of the Crucifixion are limited to very small nail marks and an indication of the wound in Jesus' side. Christ's face does not reveal signs of The Passion. Michelangelo did not want his version of the Pietà to represent death, but rather to show the "religious vision of abandonment and a serene face of the Son", thus the representation of the communion between man and God by the sanctification through Christ. It is the only piece Michelangelo ever signed: the story being (according to Giorgio Vasari) that Michelangelo overheard someone cast doubt on him as the author, due to his young age, and remarked that it was the work of another sculptor, Cristoforo Solari, whereupon he crept into the chapel at night and carved, MICHAELA[N]GELUS BONAROTUS FLORENTIN[US] FACIEBA[T] (Michelangelo Buonarroti, Florentine, made this) on the sash running across Mary's chest.

Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (1483 – 1520), known as **Raphael** was an Italian painter and architect of the High Renaissance. His work is admired for its clarity of form, ease of composition, and visual achievement of the Neoplatonic ideal of human grandeur. Together with Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci, he forms the traditional trinity of great masters of that period.

Raphael was enormously productive and talented from an early age, this finely drawn self portrait being done at about the age of sixteen.

He ran a workshop, eventually of fifty pupils and assistants, the largest of any single 'old master' and, despite his death at 37, left a large body of work.

Raphael, *Self Portrait* c 1499





Raphael, *Self Portrait* c1506

After his death, the influence of his great rival Michelangelo was more widespread until the 18th and 19th centuries, when Raphael's more serene and harmonious qualities were again regarded as the highest models. His career falls naturally into three phases and three styles, first described by Giorgio Vasari: his early years in Umbria, then a period of about four years (1504–1508) absorbing the artistic traditions of Florence, followed by his last hectic and triumphant twelve years in Rome, working for two Popes and their close associates.

Aged about twenty three this self portrait shows Raphael's soft 'feminine' style of painting.



Originally an altarpiece in the church of San Domenico, Città di Castello, near Raphael's hometown of Urbino, *The Mond Crucifixion* is an early work influenced by **Perugino**. The painting shows Jesus on the cross, who is looking peaceful even though he is dying. There are two angels catching his blood in chalices. On Jesus' left kneels Mary Magdalene, with John the Evangelist standing behind her. On his right Mary stands, and St. Jerome, to whom the altar was dedicated, is kneeling.

**Raphael,
The Mond Crucifixion 1502-3**



**Raphael, *Baronci Altarpiece*
(fragment)1500-01**

His first recorded commission, the *Baronci Altarpiece* was seriously damaged during an earthquake in 1789. It was subsequently cut into pieces to save the undamaged parts, and since 1849 fragments of the original painting have been part of different collections. In this fragment depicting an angel Raphael's soft, velvety and elegant technique which was to influence many later artists is apparent. He perfected his own version of Leonardo's sfumato modelling, to give subtlety to his painting of flesh, and developed the interplay of glances between his groups, which are much less enigmatic than those of Leonardo. But he keeps the soft clear light of Perugino, his master, in his paintings. Here we see his interest in colour contrast, opposing the primary red with its complementary green.

Raphael was one of the finest draftsmen in the history of Western art, and used drawings extensively to plan his compositions. According to a near-contemporary, when beginning to plan a composition, he would lay out a large number of stock drawings of his on the floor, and begin to draw "rapidly", borrowing figures from here and there. Over forty sketches survive for the *Disputa* in the Stanze, and there may well have been many more originally; over four hundred sheets survive altogether. He used different drawings to refine his poses and compositions, apparently to a greater extent than most other painters, to judge by the number of variants that survive: "... This is how Raphael himself, who was so rich in inventiveness, used to work, always coming up with four or six ways to show a narrative, each one different from the rest, and all of them full of grace and well done." wrote another writer after his death.

When a final composition was achieved, scaled-up full-size cartoons were often made, which were then pricked with a pin and "pounced" with a bag of soot to leave dotted lines on the surface as a guide. He also made unusually extensive use, on both paper and plaster, of a "blind stylus",

scratching lines which leave only an indentation, but no mark. These can be seen on the wall in *The School of Athens*, and in the originals of many drawings. The "Raphael Cartoons", as tapestry designs, were fully coloured in a glue distemper medium, as they were sent to Brussels to be followed by the weavers.

In later works painted by the workshop, the drawings are often painfully more attractive than the paintings. Most Raphael drawings are rather precise—even initial sketches with naked outline figures are carefully drawn, and later working drawings often have a high degree of finish, with shading and sometimes highlights in white. They lack the freedom and energy of some of Leonardo's and Michelangelo's sketches, but are nearly always aesthetically very satisfying. He was one of the last artists to use metalpoint (literally a sharp pointed piece of silver or another metal) extensively, although he also made superb use of the freer medium of red or black chalk. In his final years he was one of the first artists to use female models for preparatory drawings—male pupils ("garzoni") were normally used for studies of both sexes.



Raphael,
Three Graces, Triumph of Galettea 1512
study for Villa Farnesina



Perugino,
The Marriage of the Virgin
1500-04

These paintings depict a marriage ceremony between Mary and Joseph. Although Raphael was heavily inspired by **Pietro Perugino**, differences of the two were remarked upon within decades of the painting's completion, by 16th-century Italian artist and art biographer Giorgio Vasari, who said that in the piece "may be distinctly seen the progress of excellence of Raphael's style, which becomes much more subtle and refined, and surpasses the manner of Pietro. In this work," he continued, "there is a temple drawn in perspective with such evident care that it is marvellous to behold the difficulty of the problems which he has there set himself to solve."



Raphael
The Marriage of the Virgin
1504



Michelangelo,
The Entombment c1500-01

The Entombment is an unfinished painting of the placing of the body of Jesus in the garden tomb, now generally attributed to Michelangelo. The centre of the panel portrays Christ being carried up a flight of steps to the sepulchre, which was intended to be painted in the blank area at the top right of the work. The bearded older man behind him is probably Joseph of Arimathea, who gave up his tomb for use as Christ's sepulchre. The long-haired figure on the left is probably Saint John, wearing a long orange-red gown, with one of the Marys (possibly Mary Magdalene) kneeling at his feet.

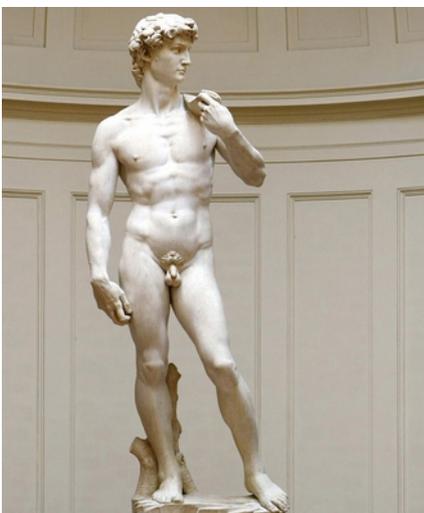
The identity of the two figures on the right is uncertain. Suggested identities for the elongated inner figure range from Nicodemus to one of the Marys, while the figure on the far right may be Mary Salome. The large unfinished area at the bottom right was intended to be used for the kneeling form of the Virgin Mary. The floating appearance of some of the figures may be partly explained by the fact that the painting is intended to be viewed from below, and to the fact that it is unfinished. However, the apparent incongruity of the stance of the bearer on the right remains problematical. Many of the unfinished parts of the painting, such as the cloak of the missing Virgin, would have required quantities of the expensive lapis lazuli blue. If this was in short supply, it could be that this would have held up completion of the painting, which may explain why it was unfinished. However, even if this were so, it would not explain why the artist could not have completed the many other parts of the painting that did not require any blue.

In Michelangelo's *Holy Family*, known as the Doni Tondo, Mary is the most prominent figure in the composition. She sits directly on the ground without a cushion between herself and the grass, to better communicate the theme of her relationship to the earth. Joseph is positioned higher in the image than Mary, although this is an unusual feature in compositions of the Holy Family. Mary is seated between his legs, as if he is protecting her, his great legs forming a kind of de facto throne, receiving the Child from Joseph. Saint John the Baptist is in the middle-ground of the painting, between the Holy Family and the background. The scene appears to be a rural one, with the Holy Family enjoying themselves on the grass and separated from the curiously (seemingly) unrelated group at the back by a low wall.



Michelangelo,
The Holy Family with the Infant
St. John the Baptist c1503-05

There is a horizontal band, possibly a wall, separating the foreground and background. The background figures are five nudes, whose meaning and function are subject to much speculation and debate. Because they are much closer to us, the viewers, the Holy Family is much larger than the nudes in the background, a device to aid the illusion of deep space in a two-dimensional image. Behind Saint John the Baptist is a semi-circular ridge, against which the 'ignudi' are leaning, or upon which they are sitting. This semi-circle reflects or mirrors the circular shape of the painting itself and acts as a foil to the vertical nature of the principal group (the Holy family). Mary and Joseph gaze at Christ, but none of the background nudes looks directly at him. The far background contains a mountainous landscape rendered in atmospheric perspective. The composition is interpreted as the infant St John and Joseph on the far side of the wall, separating the pagan world in the background from the new dispensation ushered in by Mary and the Christ Child.



Michelangelo, *David* 1501-04

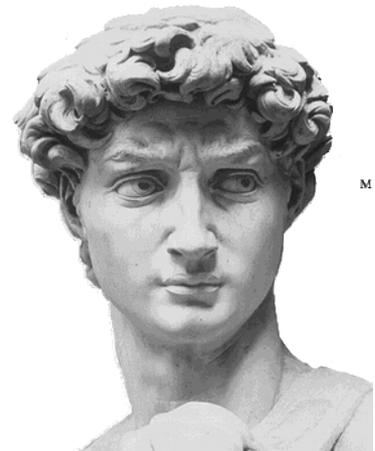
David was originally commissioned as one of a series of statues of prophets to be positioned along the roofline of the east end of Florence Cathedral, but was instead placed in a public square, outside the Palazzo Vecchio, the seat of civic government in Florence, in the Piazza della Signoria where it was unveiled on September 8, 1504. Because of the nature of the hero it represented, the statue soon came to symbolize the defence of civil liberties embodied in the Republic of Florence, an independent city-state threatened on all sides by more powerful rival states and by the hegemony of the Medici family. The eyes of David, with a warning glare, were turned towards Rome. The statue was moved to the Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, in 1873, and later replaced at the original location by a replica.

David began as part of a series of twelve large Old Testament figures, begun by Donatello in 1410. It was carved from a block of Carrara marble which had originally been provided to the Florentine sculptor Agostino in 1464. Agostino only got as far as beginning to shape the legs, feet and the torso, roughing out some drapery and probably gouging a hole between the legs. His association with the project ceased, for reasons unknown, with the death of Donatello in 1466, and ten years later Antonio Rossellino was commissioned to take up where Agostino had left off. Rossellino's contract was terminated soon thereafter, and the block of marble remained neglected for 26 years, all the while exposed to the elements in the yard of the cathedral workshop. This was of great concern to the authorities, as such a large piece of marble was not only costly, but represented a large amount of labour and difficulty in its transportation to Florence.



In 1500 the city authorities decided to find someone to complete the figure. Leonardo and others were consulted but it was the 26 year old Michelangelo who convinced them that he deserved the commission, which took him two years to complete.

David.
Replica placed on the original site



Head of David

The upper part of the body and the head seems disproportionately large; this is because it was designed to be positioned on the roofline of the cathedral. The figure is made progressively larger so that, as seen from street level, it will seem to be in correct proportion. It proved too heavy to be supported by the roof so instead was installed in the Piazza della Signoria outside the Palazzo Vecchio, the seat of civic government in Florence. The statue was moved to the Galleria dell'Accademia in 1873, and later replaced at the original location by a replica.



The women in *The Three Graces* may three represent stages of development of woman, with the girded figure on the left representing the maiden (Chastitas) and the woman to the right maturity (Voluptas), though other interpretations have certainly been advanced. In 1930,

Raphael, *Vision of a Knight/The Three Graces* 1504-5

Professor Erwin Panofsky proposed that this painting was part of a diptych along with *Vision of a Knight* and that based on the theme of Vision the painting represented the Hesperides with the golden apples which Hercules stole. Some art historians disagree with Panofsky's conclusion.



These two small versions of *Saint George and the Dragon* are known as cabinet pictures. Cabinets were small sitting rooms, often for a single person, in large houses. Being small they were easier to heat, and were more private, where a man or woman could entertain a favoured friend in privacy and out of the hearing of servants.



Raphael,
St George and the Dragon 1504-06
National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

Raphael,
St George and the Dragon
1504. Louvre, Paris

They belonged to a series of miniature panels that Raphael painted in Florence for the celebrated court of Urbino. A Roman soldier of Christian faith, Saint George saved the daughter of a pagan king by subduing a dragon with his lance; the princess then led the dragon to the city, where the saint killed it with his sword, prompting the king and his subjects to convert to Christianity.

One unusual feature of the Washington painting is the saint's blue garter on his armour-covered leg. Its inscription, HONI, begins the phrase *Honi soit qui mal y pense* (Disgraced be he who thinks ill of it), the motto of the chivalric Order of the Garter, of which George is the patron saint. Duke Guidobaldo da Montefeltro of Urbino was made a knight of the prestigious order in 1504 by King Henry VII of England.

The Saint George of the Louvre version has sometimes been ascribed to the artist's Roman period, because the horse resembles one of the horses of Monte Cavallo (the Quirinal Palace). However, Raphael could easily have known this particular horse from a drawing of it, done by one of Leonardo's pupils. To judge by the still somewhat naïve and Peruginesque style of the painting, it is really one of Raphael's early works, dating from about 1504. He did another painting of the same subject a little later (the Washington panel), and towards the end of his life he painted a large Saint Michael which is also in the Louvre.

Like its companion piece the *Saint Michael and the Dragon* also in the Louvre, to which this Saint George is closely related, the action takes place along the central axis of the picture. The protagonist has raised his sword, prepared to deliver the coup de grace. The dragon had already been mortally wounded by the thrust of a lance, now broken from the force of the blow. The strong decorative and coloristic counterpoint offered by the red and-white-striped fragments of the pole beneath the white horse was added to the conception of the scene at a point subsequent to the elegant study for the picture in the Uffizi Gallery, where a few bones of the dragon's previous victims are haphazardly placed instead. The princess flees toward the right, out of the picture in the middle distance; on the opposite side, leafy trees break the skyline, while at the horizon the landscape recedes into the infinite distance.



Probably painted in 1505, shortly after Raphael had arrived in Florence, this Madonna betrays the influence of Leonardo da Vinci, whose works he got to know there, can be seen in the use of sfumato.

Raphael, *Madonna dell'Granduca* c1505

This painting was executed by the twenty one or twenty two year old Raphael within months of his 1504–1505 arrival in Florence. The figures of the Virgin Mary, the infant Jesus, and an infant John the Baptist are shown in a calm grassy meadow, linked by looks. Mary is wearing a gold-bordered blue mantle set against a red dress, extending her right leg along a diagonal. The blue symbolizes the church and the red Christ's death, with the Madonna touching hands with Jesus the uniting of Mother Church with Christ's sacrifice. Her eyes fixed on Christ, her head turned to the left and slightly inclined, and her hands steady him as he leans forward unsteadily to touch the miniature cross held by John. The poppy refers to Christ's passion, death and resurrection. The painting depicts a peaceful, tender and idyllic moment, disturbed only by child Jesus's grabbing at the cross held by John the Baptist, which hints to the forthcoming Passion of Jesus.



Raphael, *The Madonna of the Meadows* c1506

For this painting, Raphael made many compositional preparatory drawings in red chalk. As in others he followed Leonardo's techniques in composing its subjects in pyramidal form; this can be observed in such works as Leonardo's *Virgin and the Rocks*. The painting's structure consists of translucent oil glazes, and opaque underpainting on a gesso ground. The painting is characterized by a great depth of shadows and a subtle interplay of the cool and warm tones that model the flesh. A bluish undertone, visible in the shadows and edges of the panel, underlies the creamy white and pink of the flesh. Moreover, close examination of the work suggests that the sky was painted after the figures were executed, since the blue brush strokes appear to follow the contours of the figures and are perceptible not only on the surface but also in x-rays.



The painting depicts a youthful Virgin Mary playing with the Christ child and handing him carnations. These flowers, whose botanical name is dianthus (Greek for 'flower of God'), are a premonition of Christ's Passion – according to Christian legend, the flower first appeared when the Virgin wept at the Crucifixion. The event takes place in a dimly-lit domestic setting influenced by Netherlandish art. The composition is based closely on the *Benois Madonna* by Leonardo da Vinci, although the colour scheme of blues and greens that link the Virgin with the landscape is Raphael's own. Through the arched window is a landscape with a ruined building, symbolising the collapse of the pagan world at the birth of Christ.

Raphael, *Madonna of the Pinks* c1506-7

The Benois Madonna, or *Madonna of the Flower*, is an early work by Leonardo. Although generally accepted as genuine some inadequacies of technique, such as the painting of the hands and the ear, the awkward position of Christ in the virgin's lap, and the 'unhealthily' pallid colour of the flesh; the untypical smile and absence of a view through the window, have led some authorities to question its authenticity. However, the unfinished state and the evidence of subsequent over painting point up the difficulties in making a secure attribution. Whether or not from Leonardo's own hand, the similarities of the composition show that Raphael must have known it, either in the original, a copy or an engraving.



Leonardo, *Benois Madonna* c1478



Two of the many studies made for the Deposition show Raphael's developing ideas

Raphael, *Deposition of Christ* 1507

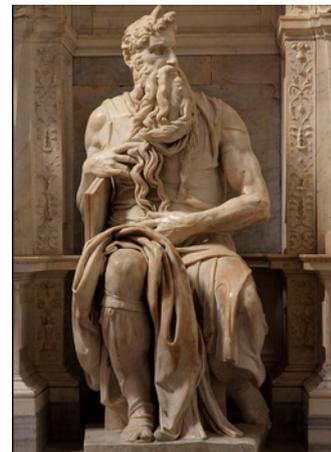
Vasari gives a detailed description of the *Deposition*: 'In this most divine picture there is a Dead Christ being borne to the Sepulchre, executed with such freshness and such loving care, that it seems to the eye to have been only just painted. In the composition of this work, Raffaello imagined to himself the sorrow that the nearest and most affectionate relatives of the dead one feel in laying to rest the body of him who has been their best beloved, and on whom, in truth, the happiness, honour, and welfare of a whole family have depended. Our Lady is seen in a swoon; and the heads of all the figures are very gracious in their weeping, particularly that of St. John, who, with his hands clasped, bows his head in such a manner as to move the hardest heart in pity. And in truth, whoever considers the diligence, love, art and grace shown by this picture, has great reason to marvel, for it amazes all who behold it, what with the air of the figures, the beauty of the draperies, and in short, the supreme excellence that it reveals in every part.'



The Tomb of Pope Julius II is a sculptural and architectural ensemble by Michelangelo and his assistants, originally commissioned in 1505 but not completed until 1545 on a much reduced scale. As originally conceived, the tomb would have been a colossal structure that would have given Michelangelo the room he needed for his superhuman, tragic beings. This project became one of the great disappointments of Michelangelo's life when the pope, for unexplained reasons, interrupted the commission, possibly because funds had to be diverted for Bramante's rebuilding of St. Peter's. The original project called for a freestanding, three-level structure with some forty over life size figures. After the pope's death in 1513, the scale of the project was reduced step-by-step until a final contract specified a simple wall tomb with fewer than one-third of the figures originally planned.

**Michelangelo,
Tomb Julius 11 1505-45.**

The most famous sculpture associated with the tomb is the figure of Moses, which Michelangelo completed during one of the sporadic resumptions of the work in 1513. Michelangelo felt that this was his most lifelike creation. Legend has it that upon its completion he struck the right knee commanding, "now speak!" as he felt that life was the only thing left inside the marble. There is a scar on the knee thought to be the mark of Michelangelo's hammer.



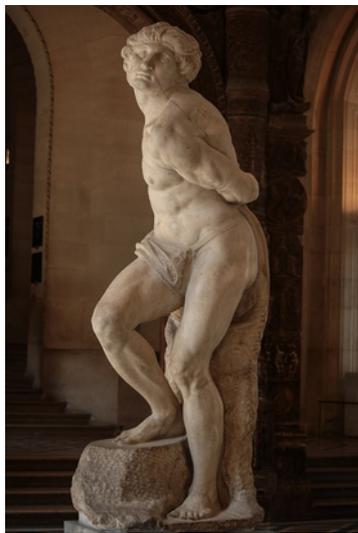
Michelangelo, *Moses* 1505-45



**Michelangelo,
Head of Moses**

The depiction of a horned Moses stems from the description of Moses' face as "*cornuta*" ("horned") in the Latin Vulgate translation of the passage found at Exodus chapter 34, in which Moses returns to the people after receiving the commandments for the second time. "And when Moses came down from the Mount Sinai, he held the two tablets of the testimony, and he knew not that his face was horned from the conversation of the Lord." However, the Hebrew term *qeren*, which often means "horn", is now interpreted to mean "shining" or "emitting rays" (somewhat like a horn).

Another reason put forward for the horns is that the sculpture in the original conception of the tomb would have been placed higher up, "where the two protrusions on the head would have been invisible to the viewer looking up from the floor below — the only thing that would have been seen was the light reflected off of them." This interpretation has been contested.



Dying Slave Rebellious Slave

The two "slaves" of the Louvre date to the second version of the tomb of Pope Julius II. In 1976 the art historian Richard Fly wrote that the *Dying Slave* "suggests that moment when life capitulates before the relentless force of dead matter" The *Rebellious Slave* is portrayed trying to free himself from the fetters which hold his hands behind his back, contorting his torso and twisting his head. The impression given, which would have contributed to the spatial appearance of the monument, was that he was moving towards the viewer, with his raised shoulder and knee.

The *Bound Slave* is one of the later figures for Pope Julius' tomb. The works, known collectively as *The Captives*, (1504-45) each show the figure struggling to free itself, as if from the bonds of the rock in which it is lodged. The works give a unique insight into Michelangelo's sculptural methods, and his way of revealing what he perceived within the rock.



**Bound Slave
or Atlas**



**Awakening
Slave**



**Bearded
Slave**



**Young
Slave**



Michelangelo, *The Sistine Chapel ceiling*

Painted by Michelangelo between 1508 and 1512, this is a cornerstone work of High Renaissance art. It was painted at the commission of Pope Julius II. The chapel is the location for papal conclaves and many other important services. The work depicts the Biblical story from the Creation, through the creation of Adam and Eve, leading to the Flood and the Drunkenness of Noah. Prophets and sibyls, foretelling the coming of Christ, are seated between the lunettes, which depict the ancestors of Christ. Seated on the pedestals of the painted architectural ribs are the 'ignudi.' These figures have no scriptural basis, but maybe are there to give reign to Michelangelo's love of representing the nude male form in extreme postures.

The ceiling's various painted elements form part of a larger scheme of decoration within the Chapel, which includes the large fresco *The Last Judgment* on the sanctuary wall, also by Michelangelo, wall paintings by several leading painters of the late 15th century including **Sandro Botticelli**, **Domenico Ghirlandaio** and **Pietro Perugino**, and a set of large tapestries by **Raphael**, the whole illustrating much of the doctrine of the Catholic Church.



Central to the ceiling decoration are nine scenes from the Book of Genesis of which The Creation of Adam is the best known, having an iconic standing equaled only by **Leonardo da Vinci's** *Mona Lisa*, the hands of God and Adam being reproduced in countless imitations. The complex design includes several sets of individual figures, both clothed and nude, which allowed Michelangelo to fully demonstrate his skill in creating a huge variety of poses for the human figure and which have provided an enormously influential pattern book of models for other artists ever since.

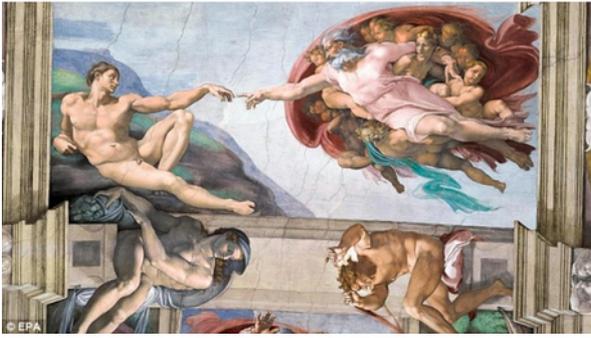
God Dividing the Waters

Showing the fresco before and after the 1980-92 restoration, which revealed the original colours, but has led to much criticism as critics assert that much original work by Michelangelo—in particular pentimenti, highlights and shadows, and other detailing painted a *secco*—was lost in the removal of various accretions.



Creation of the Sun and Moon

In this panel God creates the sun then swings around swiftly to create the moon, revealing his naked backside to the worshipers below – a testament possibly to Michaelangelo's irreverent humour.



Creation of Adam

In the *Creation of Adam* God is depicted as an elderly white-bearded man wrapped in a swirling cloak while Adam, on the lower left, is completely nude. God's right arm is outstretched to impart the spark of life from his own finger into that of Adam, whose left arm is extended in a pose mirroring God's, a reminder that man is created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26). Another point is that Adam's finger and God's finger are not touching. It gives the impression that God, the giver of life, is reaching out to Adam who has yet to receive it; they are not on "the same level" as would be two humans shaking hands, for

instance. Many hypotheses have been formulated regarding the identity and meaning of the twelve figures around God. The person protected by God's left arm might be Eve due to the figure's feminine appearance and gaze towards Adam, but was also suggested to be Virgin Mary, Sophia goddess of wisdom, the personified human soul, or an angel of feminine build.

In the final panel of this sequence Michelangelo combines two contrasting scenes into one panel, that of Adam and Eve taking fruit from the forbidden tree (a fig and not an apple tree as commonly depicted in Western Christian art), which divides the composition down the middle. Eve trustingly takes the fruit from the hand of the Serpent (depicted as the temptress Lilith) and Adam eagerly picks it for himself. In their banishment by an angel from the Garden of Eden, where they have lived in the company of God, to the world outside where they have to fend for themselves and experience death, they are depicted as bowed and greatly aged. No branch or leaf from the tree, representing the Garden, intrudes into this side where the landscape is bleak and empty.



The Temptation

Before the Fall they are arranged into a single compositional unit, afterward they appear as separate and isolated in their despair.

Adam turns to his left to pluck the fruit, Eve does likewise to receive the fruit from the serpent. When being expelled they put their left feet forward, not their 'best' feet. Left has long been associated in popular folk-law with the devil. If Eve, after receiving the fruit, turns her head back her eyes (or mouth?) will directly confront Adam's maleness, the source of temptation and the instrument of future generations.

John Collier, *Lilith* 1887

Lilith (*Lilīṯ*) is a figure in Jewish Mythology, developed earliest in the Babylonian Talmud (3rd to 5th century CE). In Hebrew-language texts, the term *lilith* or *Lilit* translates as "night creatures", "night monster", "night hag", or "screech owl". Lilith is often envisioned as a dangerous demon of the night, who is sexually wanton, and who steals babies in the darkness.



In Jewish folklore, from the *Alphabet of Sirach* (c. 700–1000 CE) onwards, Lilith appears as Adam's first wife, who was created at the same time and from the same clay as Adam—compare Genesis 1:27. (This contrasts with Eve, who was created from one of Adam's ribs) with Genesis 2:22. The legend developed extensively during the Middle Ages, in the tradition of Aggadah, the Zohar, and Jewish mysticism. For example, in the 13th-century writings of Isaac ben Jacob ha-Cohen, Lilith left Adam after she refused to become subservient to him and then would not return to the Garden of Eden after she had coupled with the archangel Samael.



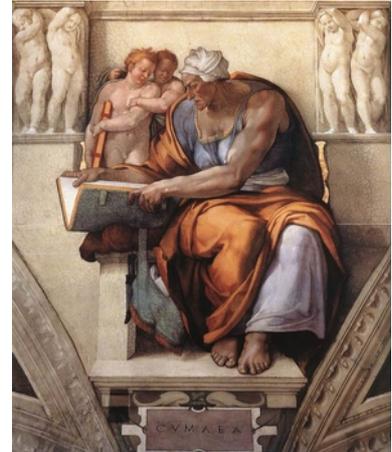
The Libyan Sibyl

The Sibyls were prophetic women who were resident at shrines or temples throughout the Classical World. The five depicted here are each said to have prophesied the birth of Christ. The Cumaean Sibyl, for example, is quoted by Virgil in his Fourth *Eclogue* as declaring that "a new progeny of Heaven" would bring about a return of the "Golden Age". This was interpreted as referring to Jesus.

It is not known why Michelangelo selected the five particular Sibyls that were depicted, given that, as with the Minor Prophets, there were ten or twelve possibilities. It is suggested by John O'Malley that the choice was made for a wide geographic coverage, with the Sibyls coming from Africa, Asia, Greece and Ionia.

To reach the chapel's ceiling, Michelangelo designed his own scaffold, a flat wooden platform on brackets built out from holes in the wall near the top of the windows, rather than being built up from the floor.

Contrary to popular belief, he painted in a standing position, not lying on his back. According to Vasari, "The work was carried out in extremely uncomfortable conditions, from his having to work with his head tilted upwards". Michelangelo described his physical discomfort in a humorous sonnet accompanied by a little sketch.



Cumaen Sibyl



Ignudi

Their painting demonstrates, more than any other figures on the ceiling, Michelangelo's mastery of anatomy and foreshortening and his enormous powers of invention. In their reflection of classical antiquity they resonate with Pope Julius' aspirations to lead Italy towards a new 'age of gold'; at the same time, they staked Michelangelo's claim to greatness. However, a number of critics were angered by their presence and nudity, including Pope Adrian VI who wanted the ceiling stripped.

The *Ignudi* are the 20 athletic, nude males that Michelangelo painted as supporting figures at each corner of the five smaller narrative scenes that run along the centre of the ceiling. The figures hold or are draped with or lean on a variety of items which include pink ribbons, green bolsters and enormous garlands of acorns.

The meaning of these figures has never been clear. They are certainly in keeping with the Humanist acceptance of the classical Greek view that "the man is the measure of all things". But Michelangelo knew the Bible well. He would have been well aware of the fact that although seraphim and cherubim are described as being winged creatures, they are described as looking like men.

Fresco

The painting technique employed was fresco, in which the paint is applied to damp plaster. Michelangelo had been an apprentice in the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, one of the most competent and prolific of Florentine fresco painters, at the time that the latter was employed on a fresco cycle at Santa Maria Novella and whose work was represented on the walls of the Sistine Chapel. At the outset, the plaster, intonaco, began to grow mold because it was too wet. Michelangelo had to remove it and start again. He then tried a new formula created by one of his assistants, which resisted mold and entered the Italian building tradition.

The evidence of the plaster laid for a day's work can be seen around the head and arm of this ignudo. Because he was painting fresco, the plaster was laid in a new section every day, called a giornata. At the beginning of each session, the edges would be scraped away and a new area laid down. The edges between giornate remain slightly visible; thus, they give a good idea of how the work progressed. It was customary for fresco painters to use a full-sized detailed drawing, a cartoon, to transfer a design onto a plaster surface—many frescoes show little holes made with a stiletto, outlining the figures. Here Michelangelo broke with convention; once confident the intonaco had been well applied, he drew directly onto the ceiling. His energetic sweeping outlines can be seen scraped into some of the surfaces, while on others a grid is evident, indicating that he enlarged

directly onto the ceiling from a small drawing. Michelangelo painted onto the damp plaster using a wash technique to apply broad areas of colour, then as the surface became drier, he revisited these areas with a more linear approach, adding shade and detail with a variety of brushes. For some textured surfaces, such as facial hair and woodgrain, he used a broad brush with bristles as sparse as a comb. He employed all the finest workshop methods and best innovations, combining them with a diversity of brushwork and breadth of skill far exceeding that of the meticulous Ghirlandaio.



Leonardo's cartoon for *The Virgin and Child with St Anne* depicts the Virgin Mary seated on the knees of her mother St Anne and holding the Christ Jesus while St. John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus, stands to the right.

There is a subtle interplay between the gazes of the four figures. St Anne smiles adoringly at her daughter Mary, perhaps indicating not only maternal pride but also the veneration due to the one who "all generations will call...blessed". Mary's eyes are fixed on the Christ Child who raises his hand in a gesture of benediction over the cousin who thirty years later would carry out his appointed task of baptising Jesus. Although the older of the two children, John the Baptist humbly accepts the blessing. St Anne's hand, her index finger pointing towards the Heaven, is positioned near the heads of the children, perhaps to indicate the original source of the blessing. This enigmatic gesture is regarded as quintessentially Leonardesque, occurring in *The Last Supper* and *St John the Baptist*.

Cartoons of this sort were usually transferred to a board for painting by pricking or incising the outline. In the *Virgin and Child with St Anne* and *St John the Baptist* this has not been done, suggesting that the drawing has been kept as a work of art in its own right.

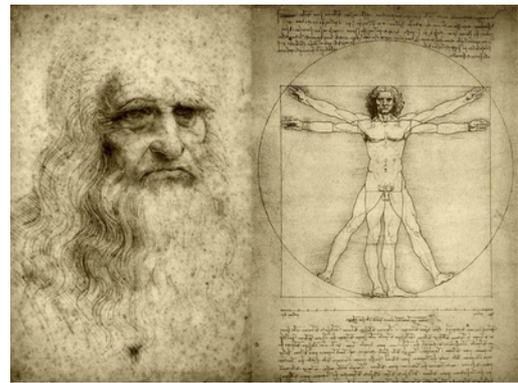
The painting depicts St Anne, her daughter the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus. Christ is shown grappling with a sacrificial lamb symbolizing his Passion as the Virgin tries to restrain him. Upon close examination of their positioning it is apparent that Mary is sitting on St Anne's lap. It is unclear what meaning this could have and what meaning Leonardo intended to project with that pose. There is no clear parallel in other works of art and women sitting in each other's lap are not a clear cultural or traditional reference that the viewer can relate to. Additionally, although the exact sizes of neither the Mother Virgin nor St Anne are known, it can be extrapolated from the painting that St Anne is a significantly larger person than Mary.



Leonardo, *The Virgin and Child with St Anne* 1510

Leonardo was more prolific as a draftsman than as a painter, keeping journals full of small sketches and detailed drawings recording all manner of things that took his attention. As well as the journals there exist many studies for paintings, some of which can be identified as preparatory to particular works such as *The Adoration of the Magi*, *The Virgin of the Rocks* and *The Last Supper*.

Leonardo, Notebook



Foetus



Caricature



Caricature



Raphael, Stanza 1509-11

By the end of 1508, Raphael had moved to Rome, where he lived for the rest of his life. He was immediately commissioned by Pope Julius II to fresco what was intended to become the Pope's private library at the Vatican Palace. This was a much larger and more important commission than any he had received before. This first of the famous "Stanze" or "Raphael Rooms" to be painted, now known as the Stanza della Segnatura after its use in Vasari's time, was to make a stunning impact on Roman art, and remains generally regarded as his greatest masterpiece, containing *The School of Athens*, *The Parnassus* and the *Disputa*.

Raphael was then given further rooms to paint, displacing other artists including **Perugino** and **Signorelli**. He completed a sequence of three rooms, each with paintings on each wall and often the ceilings too, increasingly leaving the work of painting from his detailed drawings to the large and skilled workshop team he had acquired, who added a fourth room, probably only including some elements designed by Raphael, after his early death in 1520.

In the *Disputa*, Raphael has created a scene spanning both heaven and earth. Above, Christ is surrounded by a halo, with the Blessed Virgin Mary, John the Baptist at his right and left. Other various biblical figures such as Adam (far left, bared chest), Jacob (far right, red robe and sword) and Moses (right, holding tablets with the ten commandments) are to the sides. God the Father sits above Jesus, depicted reigning over the golden light of heaven, and below Christ's feet is the Holy Spirit. On opposite sides of the Holy Spirit are the four gospels, held by putti. Below, on the altar sits the monstrance. The altar is flanked by theologians who are depicted debating Transubstantiation. Christ's Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity is the Holy Eucharist, which is discussed by representatives of the Church.



Raphael, *Disputa* 1509-11



Raphael, *Parnassus* 1509-11

The whole room shows the four areas of human knowledge: philosophy, religion, poetry and law, with The Parnassus representing poetry. The fresco shows the mythological Mount Parnassus where Apollo dwells; he is in the centre playing an instrument (a contemporary lira da braccio rather than a classical lyre), surrounded by the nine muses, nine poets from antiquity, and nine contemporary poets. Apollo, along with Calliope, the muse of epic poetry, inspired poets.

The subject of the "School" is ancient Greek philosophy. Plato and Aristotle appear to be the central figures in the scene. Commentators have suggested that nearly every great ancient Greek philosopher can be found in the painting, but determining which are depicted is difficult. The popular idea that the rhetorical gestures of Plato and Aristotle are kinds of pointing (to the heavens, and down to earth) is very likely. But Plato's *Timaeus* – which is the book Raphael places in his hand – was a sophisticated treatment of space, time, and change, including the Earth, which guided mathematical sciences for over a millennium. Aristotle, with his four-elements theory, held that all change on Earth was owing to motions of the heavens. In the painting Aristotle carries his *Ethics*, which he denied could be reduced to a mathematical science.



Raphael, *The School of Athens* 1509-11



The manner in which the subject of Pope Julius II is presented was unusual for its time. Previous Papal portraits showed them frontally, or kneeling in profile. It was also "exceptional" at this period to show the sitter so evidently in a particular mood – here lost in thought. The intimacy of this image was unprecedented in Papal portraiture, but became the model, "virtually a formula", followed by most future painters, including **Sebastiano del Piombo** and **Diego Velázquez**. According to Erica Langmuir, "it was the conflation of ceremonial significance and intimacy which was so startling, combined with Raphael's ability to define the inner structure of things along with their outer texture".

Raphael, *Pope Julius II* 1512

The villa Farnesina was built for Agostino Chigi, a rich Siennese banker and the treasurer of Pope Julius II. Chigi also commissioned the fresco decoration of the villa by artists such as **Raphael**, **Sebastiano del Piombo**, **Giulio Romano**, and **Il Sodoma**. The themes were inspired by the Stanze of the poet Angelo Poliziano, a key member of the circle of Lorenzo de Medici. Best known are Raphael's frescoes on the ground floor; in the loggia depicting the classical and secular myths of Cupid and Psyche, and *The Triumph of Galatea*.



Villa Farnesina



This, one of Raphael's few purely secular paintings in the villa, shows the near-naked nymph on a shell-shaped chariot amid frolicking attendants and is reminiscent of **Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus***.

In Greek mythology, the beautiful Nereid Galatea had fallen in love with the peasant shepherd Acis. Her consort, one-eyed giant Polyphemus, after chancing upon the two lovers together, lobbed an enormous pillar and killed Acis. Raphael did not paint any of the main events of the story. He chose the scene of the nymph's apotheosis. Galatea appears surrounded by other sea creatures, whose forms are somewhat inspired by Michelangelo, whereas the bright colours and decoration are supposed to be inspired by ancient Roman painting. At the left, a Triton (partly man, partly fish) abducts a sea nymph; behind them, another Triton uses a shell as a trumpet. Galatea rides a shell-chariot drawn by two dolphins.

Raphael, *Three Graces, Triumph of Galetea* 1512



Bindo Altoviti was a rich banker born in Rome in 1491 of Florentine origin. He was a cultured man who liked the arts. The graceful, almost effeminate position of the subject along with the heavy contrast between light and shadow are atypical of Raphael's work, particularly of his portraits of men, demonstrating the artist's experimentation with different styles and forms in his later Roman period. The influence of the works of Leonardo, which Raphael studied astutely during this period of his career, is strikingly evident in this particular piece.

Raphael, *Portrait of Bindo Altoviti* c.1515

In contrast to works depicting classical, idealised Madonnas and figures from antiquity, this portrait of Pope Leo X shows the sitter in a realistic manner. The Pope is depicted with the weight of late middle age, while his sight appears to be strained. The painting sets up a series of visual contradictions between appearance and reality, intended by Raphael to reflect the unrest of a period of turmoil for the papacy. Martin Luther had recently challenged papal authority, listing among other grievances, Leo X's method of selling indulgences to fund work on St Peter's.

The pommel on top of the Pope's chair evokes the symbolic abacus balls of the Medici family, while the illuminated Bible open on the table has been identified as the Hamilton Bible, a fourteenth century illuminated manuscript Bible.



Raphael, *Pope Leo X with two Cardinals* 1518.



Raphael, *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes* Cartoon 1515

The Raphael Cartoons are seven large cartoons for tapestries, belonging to the British Royal Collection but since 1865 on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, designed by Raphael in 1515–16 and showing scenes from the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles. They are the only surviving members of a set of ten cartoons commissioned by Pope Leo X for tapestries for the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican Palace, which are still (on special occasions) hung below Michelangelo's famous ceiling. Raphael knew that the final product of his work would be produced by craftsmen rendering his design in another medium; his efforts are therefore entirely concentrated on strong compositions and broad effects, rather than felicitous handling or detail.

This tondo depicts Mary embracing the child Christ, while the young John the Baptist devoutly watches. Painted during his Roman period, this Madonna does not have the strict geometrical form and linear style of his earlier Florentine treatments of the same subject. Instead, the warmer colours seem to suggest the influence of Titian and Raphael's rival **Sebastiano del Piombo**.



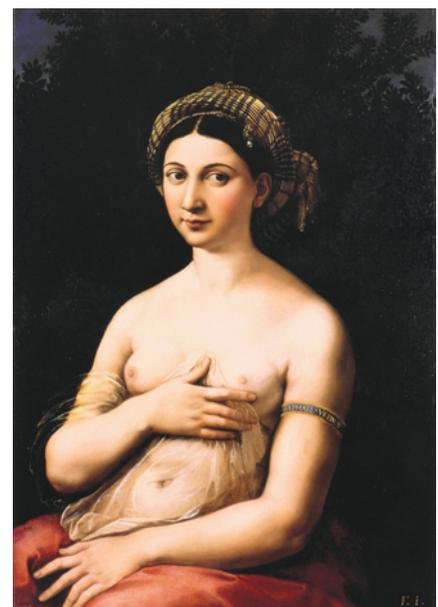
Raphael, *Madonna del Sedia* 1513



Raphael, *Baldassare Castiglione* 1515.

Considered one of the great portraits of the Renaissance, this painting has an enduring influence. It depicts Raphael's friend, the diplomat and humanist Baldassare Castiglione, who is considered a quintessential example of the High Renaissance gentleman. The picture's elegance of execution is consistent with the attitude of the subject. Art historian Lawrence Gowing noted the counter-intuitive handling of gray velvet (actually a fur) as contrary to an academic modelling of form, with the broad surfaces banked in rich darkness and the fabric shining most brightly as it turns away from the light. For Gowing, "The picture has the subtlety of baroque observation but the stillness and noble contour of classic painting at its peak." The portrait's composition and atmospheric quality suggest an homage to the Mona Lisa, which Raphael would have seen in Rome. Yet the Castiglione portrait transcends questions of influence; art historian James Beck wrote that "The Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione stands as a final solution for single male portraiture within the Renaissance style..."

The woman in this portrait is traditionally identified with the *fornarina* (baker) Margherita Luti, Raphael's Roman lover, though this has been questioned. The woman is pictured with an oriental style hat and bare breasts. She is making the gesture to cover her left breast, or to turn it with her hand, and is illuminated by a strong light coming from outside. Her left arm has a narrow band carrying the signature of the artist, RAPHAELE URBINAS. It has been suggested that the right hand on the left breast reveals a cancerous breast tumour disguised in a classic pose of love. Another speculation is that she is touching her left breast to remind herself which side she last fed her child on, the child being Raphael's.



Raphael, *La Fornarina* 1518-19.



The canvas was one of the last Madonnas painted by the artist. Giorgio Vasari called it "a truly rare and extraordinary work". A prominent element within the painting, the winged angels beneath Mary are famous in their own right. As early as 1913 Gustav Kobbé declared that "no cherub or group of cherubs is so famous as the two that lean on the altar top indicated at the very bottom of the picture." Heavily marketed, they have been featured in stamps, postcards, T-shirts, and wrapping paper. These cherubim have inspired legends of their own. According to a 1912 article in *Fra Magazine*, when Raphael was painting the Madonna the children of his model would come in to watch. Struck by their posture as they did, the story goes, he added them to the painting exactly as he saw them. Another story, recounted in 1912's *St. Nicholas Magazine*, says that Raphael rather was inspired by two children he encountered on the street when he saw them "looking wistfully into the window of a baker's shop."

Raphael, *Sistina Madonna* 1520.



Michelangelo, *Medici Chapel* The Medici Chapels (Cappelle medicee) are two structures at the Basilica of San Lorenzo, Florence, Italy, dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, and built as extensions to Brunelleschi's 15th-century church, with the purpose of celebrating the Medici family, patrons of the church and Grand Dukes of Tuscany. The Sagrestia Nuova, ("New Sacristy"), was designed by Michelangelo for two members of the family, Giuliano, youngest son of Lorenzo the magnificent and Lorenzo II, the grandson of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Giuliano's tomb is ornamented with the *Night* and *Day*, while Lorenzo's is ornamented with *Dawn* and *Dusk*.

The statues are depicted as Roman soldiers and are not realistic representations of the actual men, but were meant as allegorical figures. Lorenzo is envisioned as a reflective man, with a dark countenance whose helmet and hand keep light off his face, whereas Giuliano is seen as a man of action, holding a military weapon.

It is thought that the four parts of day were meant as an allegory for the phases of life: 'dawn' for the time of youth, 'dusk' as we approach old age, 'day' for our time on earth and 'night' for death. *Night* and *Dawn* are Michelangelo's only female nude sculptures.



Night



Day



Dusk



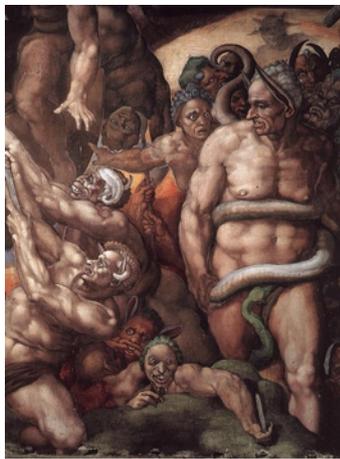
Dawn

The Last Judgment is a depiction of the Second Coming of Christ and the final and eternal judgment by God of all humanity. The souls of humans rise and descend to their fates, as judged by Christ who is surrounded by prominent saints. Altogether there are over 300 figures, with nearly all the males and angels originally shown as nudes; many were later partly covered up by painted draperies, of which some remain after recent cleaning and restoration.

The Last Judgment became controversial as soon as it was seen, with disputes between critics in the Catholic Counter-Reformation and supporters of the genius of the artist and the style of the painting. Michelangelo was accused of being insensitive to proper decorum, in respect of nudity and other aspects of the work, and of pursuing artistic effect over following the scriptural description of the event.



Michelangelo, Last Judgement 1536-41



The mixing of figures from pagan mythology into depictions of Christian subject matter was objected to. As well as the figures of Charon and Minos, and wingless angels, the very classicized Christ was objected to. Beardless Christs had in fact only finally disappeared from Christian art some four centuries earlier, but Michelangelo's figure was unmistakably Apollonian.

Group of the damned, with Biagio da Cesena as **Minos** at right.

Saint Bartholomew displaying his flayed skin, with the face of Michelangelo



In 1546, Michelangelo was appointed architect of St. Peter's Basilica, Rome. The process of replacing the Constantinian basilica of the 4th century had been underway for fifty years and in 1506 foundations had been laid to the plans of Bramante. Successive architects had worked on it, but little progress had been made. Michelangelo was persuaded to take over the project. He returned to the concepts of Bramante, and developed his ideas for a centrally planned church, strengthening the structure both physically and visually. The dome, not completed until after his death, has been called by Banister Fletcher, "the greatest creation of the Renaissance"

The Deposition, also known as *the Florentine Pietà*, the sculpture, on which Michelangelo worked between 1547 and 1555, depicts four figures: the dead body of Jesus Christ, newly taken down from the Cross, Nicodemus (or possibly Joseph of Arimathea), Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary.

After 8 years of working on the piece, Michelangelo would go on and attempt to destroy the work in a fit of frustration. This marked the end of Michelangelo's work on the piece and from there the piece found itself in the hands of Francesco Bandini, who hired an apprentice sculptor, by the name of Tiberio Calcagni, to restore the work to its current composition. The left leg of Christ is missing. Since its inception, the piece has been plagued by ambiguities and never ending interpretations, with no straightforward answers available.

Michelangelo, *The Deposition* 1547-55



The composition of this work has caused controversy and debate since its creation. Art historians have argued back and forth about what scene or scenes are being presented in this piece as well as the true identity of the hooded figure encapsulating the scene. Though it is regarded as a Pietà out of tradition, there is substantial evidence that suggest that this piece could either be a deposition, a Pietà, an entombment, or perhaps a scene that depicts all three. The only way to truly know which scenes or scenes are being depicted lies within the identity of the hooded figure, probably representing Nicodemus and considered to be a self-portrait of Michelangelo himself.



The Rondanini Pietà was begun before *The Deposition of Christ* was completed in 1555. In his dying days, Michelangelo hacked at the marble block until only the legs and dismembered right arm of Christ survived from the sculpture as originally conceived. The elongated Virgin and Christ are a departure from the idealised figures that exemplified the sculptor's earlier style, and have been said to bear more of a resemblance to the attenuated figures of Gothic sculpture than those of the Renaissance. Some also suggest that the elongated figures are reminiscent of the style used in Mannerism. It has also been suggested that the sculpture should not be considered unfinished, but a work in a continuous process of being made visible by the viewer as he or she moves around to see it from multiple angles. As it remains, the sculpture has an abstract quality, in keeping with 20th-century concepts of sculpture.

Michelangelo, *Rondanini Pietà* 1552-64

Michelangelo died in Rome in 1564, three weeks before his 89th birthday. His body was taken from Rome for interment at the Basilica of Santa Croce, fulfilling the maestro's last request to be buried in his beloved Florence.