

High renaissance critical thinking

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The culmination of artistic explorations and developments known as the High Renaissance began with the works of Leonardo in 1480's and ended in 1527 with the sack of Rome. High Renaissance represents a wide range of outstanding talents who worked in the same area and the same period of time, they did not follow strict rules of antiquity anymore. The main ideals of classical humanism were already successfully put into effect in painting and sculpture, now the artists had the tools, technology, ideas and belief in their own powers and abilities to go their own way. The smaller parts of High Renaissance could be found here and there in Italy: in Milan, in Florence, but mainly in Rome. In Rome High Renaissance has been patronized by the group of ambitious and wealthy Popes, who agreed on the idea that "Rome needed better art". With the financial power the Popes could deliver the finest artists for important assignments from all over Italy. Who are these artistic geniuses, who come up in our mind whenever the term "High Renaissance" is mentioned and who deserve to enjoy the lasting fame for their accomplishments? They are Leonardo da Vinci, master of oil painting; Raphael, the painter of the High Renaissance; Michelangelo, sculptor and fresco painter of the Age; Titian, the master of color painting and Donato Bramante, the leading architect of the High Renaissance

St. Peter's Basilica is a major basilica in Vatican. The holy place of Christendom St. Peter's Basilica stands on the place where the apostle Peter, the first pope, was crucified and buried. St. Peter's Basilica was founded by Constantine in 324 and in the 15th century it was made a crucial decision that it should be rebuilt. The work on the project began under the patronage of Pope Julius II in 1506 and was completed in 1615 under Pope Paul V.

Originally Donato Bramante was the main architect. He intended to accomplish the idea of the Renaissance tradition – namely central plan, ideal proportions, symmetry, – which should for its part symbolize “ the perfection of God”. Later, plans were modified after the death of Pope Julius II and Bramante. A great amount of other artists continued working on the project, among them were Raphael, Peruzzi, Sangallo, Michelangelo, Bernini.

“ Without having seen the Sistine Chapel one can form no appreciable idea of what one man is capable of achieving” (J. W. Goethe). The Sistine Chapel was built between 1475 and 1483 and named after the Pope who was responsible for the construction, Sixtus IV. It has the exact dimensions of the Temple of Solomon: 40 feet wide by 130 feet long. The famous artists Michelangelo, Botticelli and Signorelli were working on this project. The paintings reproduce in details nine stories from the Christian Bible's Book of Genesis. The Sistine Chapel is considered to be the world's greatest art masterpiece.

The Stanza della Segnatura is famous for Raphael's frescoes, which were painted between 1508 and 1511. The iconographic project was initiated by Julius II and the main idea was to reproduce the three greatest categories of the human spirit: Truth, Good and Beauty. The Supernatural Truth is illustrated in the Disputation of the Most Holy Sacrament (theology), while rational Truth – in the School of Athens (philosophy). Good is represented in the Cardinal and Theological Virtues and the Law and Beauty is expressed in the Parnassus.

The Medici Popes came from a wealthy family from Florentine and were associated with the strengthening cultural ideas during Renaissance after

the death of Pope Julius II. “ It was for this achievement that Raphael has remained famous throughout the centuries” – the portrait “ Pope Leo X with two cardinals”. In the same period of time, when this portrait was painted, Luther had criticized the Pope for raising money for the St Peter's Basilica. Due to the sociable qualities and private contacts with papal court after the death of Bramante in 1514 Raphael became the architect of St. Peter's Basilica, also he was supported by the Pope Leo X in designing churches, villas and palaces.

The Laurentian Library in Florence, Italy is recognized by architectural historians as the greatest of all Renaissance library buildings, it contains of more than 11, 000 manuscripts and 4, 500 early printed books. Pope Clement VII assigned Michelangelo in 1525 to design a library building in the upper cloisters of the basilica of San Lorenzo in Florence, the architect used to work under intense pressure of the Pope, it has been reflected in their correspondence.

The women of Renaissance times were denied all political rights, they were mainly expected to be good housewives and to give birth to children. The first lady who broke these stereotypes in the Renaissance period was Isabella d'Este, passionate art collector. She associated and patronized many of the Renaissance's painters, writers, poets, and musicians, such as Battista Spagnoli, Perugino, Raphael, Castiglione Andrea Mantegna and Bandello, Ariosto, Giulio Romano, Bartolomeo Tromboncino and Marchetto Cara. She supported writers and sculptors, collecting their works and attracting other artists, writers, thinkers, and musicians to the region, she inspired and encouraged the greatest artists of her time.

The Sistine Chapel Choir is one of the oldest religious choirs in the world. In the Renaissance the members of the choir were the greatest names of that period. Josquin des Prez, the highly praised composer of the entire Renaissance, was also among them. Martin Luther regarded his works with approval and called the composer "master of the notes." Josquin was a singer in the Sistine Chapel choir from 1489 to about 1495. Among his known works are 112 motets, including *La Déploration sur la mort Ockeghem*, 20 masses, 6 mass sections and 70 chansons.

Niccolo Machiavelli is considered to be "the father of modern political science" and the founder of the modern political philosophy. In Machiavelli's guidebook for the leader "The Prince", directed to the ruler of Florence Lorenzo de' Medici, he gives practical advices on how to be an successful ruler, how to stay in power and produce good results.

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