

The painting of the sistine chapel

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



The Sistine Chapel, located in the Vatican City, was painted by Michelangelo Buonarroti between 1508 and 1512, but the actual chapel's construction was finished in 1480 under the supervision of Pope Sixtus IV. Michelangelo accepted the commission reluctantly knowing that painting a ceiling of over 5,000 square feet, and 60 feet in the air was a near impossible task and would require him to give up his love of sculpting. Michelangelo started painting the chapel commissioned to paint only the twelve disciples on the ceiling. The final product yielded over 300 figures. The basic mindset that Michelangelo had while painting the ceiling was extravagance and perfection. The ceiling had originally been painted with a blue sky and gold stars. That was Michelangelo's starting canvas. Michelangelo realized that he needed help with this project. No one could paint that big of an area by themselves (or so he thought). Once he rounded up a dozen or so up and coming artists he had to deal with the problem of finding a way to get 60 feet in the air. He hired a skilled architect to build a special scaffolding. The architect's idea for the scaffolding was to hang it from the ceiling by four big heavy ropes. Michelangelo discarded this idea because it would put four large holes in his final work. He then drew the plans for the scaffolding himself. He had a set of zigzag stairs that led to the scaffolding which was supported from the sides of the chapel. This allowed him more room to work, and didn't interfere with the ceiling. The next step was to find a medium of paint to use on the chapel ceiling. He started painting the chapel by laying down a base of plaster then painting over it. Soon, he realized that the moisture in the walls caused mold to grow which then softened the plaster causing it to crumble. This was a disappointing setback for Michelangelo, but

his most trusted assistant, Jacopo L'Indaco, developed a new plaster that would not retain moisture. This allowed the painting to continue. Soon after Michelangelo was back on track he realized that he could not trust any assistants to do the painting besides L'Indaco. He locked the rest of his assistants out of the chapel and continued his painting at a much slower pace. This angered the Pope who was already becoming very impatient with Michelangelo. The two of them fought day and night about the painting. This fighting resulted in Michelangelo taking an " unannounced" leave of absence. The Pope then spent many resources to hunt down Michelangelo and force him to finish the ceiling. After many months of searching, Michelangelo returned on his own will to finish what he started. As the days went by Michelangelo made great progress, but also realized that his vision was slowly deteriorating. Before he could finish the ceiling he was hospitalized. One day the Pope came to visit him and ask if he was going to finish the ceiling. When Michelangelo said no, the Pope cleverly said, " then I will have Rafeal finish the ceiling for you, after all he has mastered your technique". As soon as Michelangelo heard these words he jumped out of bed, and quickly finished the ceiling, and for once, he pleased the Pope. As soon as Michelangelo heard that the pope's idea for the ceiling was to just have the twelve Disciples on the ceiling, he knew he was going to have to use his imagination and come up with a amazing design worthy of the beautiful chapel. Michelangelo was a devout Christian and he had a great knowledge of the stories of the Bible. With this knowledge he selected some of the most interesting stories from the Bible and decided to interpret them into paintings. Here was his layout of the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Although the

ceiling seems very random, almost as if it were a collage, Michelangelo had a method to his madness and the painting came together very well. The most famous scene from the ceiling is God giving life to Adam. I don't have a favorite section. To me they are all works of art in their own. Michelangelo seemed very intrigued by the story of Noah. He dedicated three whole panels of the ceiling to Noah's adventure during the flood. The Drunkenness of Noah, The Flood, and The Sacrifice of Noah. The border of the ceiling consists of the twelve Diciples. This is ironic because although they were planned to be the main focus of the ceiling they ended up at the edges, and not in the glory of the center. Overall the ceiling was divided into 33 sections. The number three was very symbolic for Michelangelo, and no one knows for sure why. Here are some examples. 33 panels on the ceiling, 333 figures on the ceiling (so says Michelangelo) and lastly Michelangelo also said that he worked for 13: 33 minutes on the ceiling every day. The 33 panels consisted of the 12 apostles, and 21 biblical stories. The ceiling was under much scrutiny because it showed God in human form. The priests disapproved of this, but, for once, the Pope came to Michelangelo's defense and asked the priests to respect the amazing work of art. Today the ceiling is not on public display in the city of the Vatican because of its delicacy. It has undergone many reconstruction phases, and, like many other ancient wonders, is deteriorating. The ceiling is heavily protected and only a selected few people are allowed into the chapel. Before they enter they are screened for many harmful materials such as, hairspray, certain clothing materials, and even DUST! All of these precautions are to help protect the miraculous work of art, and allow generation upon generation to gape at its beauty. With

the renaissance came many great works of art and many great artists. Michelangelo was one of the few of these revolutionary artists that could compare to the mind of Leonardo Da Vinci. He was also the painter of the only piece of art that I can think of that even comes close to rivaling the Mona Lisa. That would of course be the ceiling of the Sistine chapel. With four years of work and countless hours of painting, turmoil, and failure, the ceiling was completed, and will remain one of the most respected, and admired paintings of all time.