

Raphael

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



Visual analysis assignment, discussing Raphael and the fresco, The School of Athens, (1510-1511). It measures 5.79 x 8.10m and is housed in The Stanza Della Signature, Vatican, Rome. Raphael Sansei or Saint (1483 - died Rome 1520) was a major art figure in the age of the Renaissance. He was "one of the greatest portrait artists of all time and one of the greatest painters of classical figure groups" I Gerard El grand in his studies of Renaissance Art agrees with this statement. " He helped to define the Italian High Renaissance. " 2 Raphael's artistic education began early.

His father Giovanni Saint was a painter in the Montenegro court. Raphael in subsequent years trained as a painter and gradually surpassed his teachers. Raphael was possibly a student of Perusing as their painting style was very similar but as Raphael progressed in his studies; his compositions superseded his teacher's works. " He surpasses his influential mentor Perusing in the rendering of tender yet powerful beauty. " 4 It was in 1508 that Raphael was summoned by Pope Julius II to work for the Vatican and it is where Raphael created the monumental work, School of Athens. In 1508 Raphael was summoned by Pope Julius II to work for the Vatican, where he produced his elaborate frescoes and established his own workshop. " 5 The age of the Renaissance needs to be understood in order to study and comprehend the School of Athens fresco and its underlying meanings. The ideas and knowledge of Ancient Greece were of paramount importance at this time especially in regards to the practice of art. " It was an era when ancient practices were given a new birth. The name Renaissance was commonly used as well as other definitions, renovation and restitution.

This also explains why the artists saw themselves as revolutionaries. They saw their own potential; they had a desire to exist. It was a remarkable feat of self assertion. " 6 The humanist ideology and followers of this movement helped to reinvent Classical Greek culture. Pico della Mirandola was the most famous of the humanists and was the first to put forward the idea of returning to Classical Antiquity. " That this return could only be a new beginning and not simply a matter of blind faith. " 1 The humanists were involved in translating ancient texts, such as Plato's Times and Aristotle Mechanical Ethics. " They also wanted to reconcile Platonism with a well assimilated Aristotelian but also with the three main religions Christianity, Judaism and Islam. 3 These rediscovered ancient texts " could restore man to a place in a cosmos that was ordered differently from the Aristotelian cosmos". 4 Humanism and its influence transformed the Renaissance artists' practice, their methods of painting and the subjects expressed. " The ideas of the Ancient Greeks transformed the fields of philology, medicine and theology. 5 The reinterpretation of the sciences, mathematics and physics can be seen with the new developments in painting at this time. " To talk about 'renaissance art' is to talk first and foremost about the broader cultural phenomenon of the Renaissance itself. 6 The Renaissance was not a time whereby the ideals of Classical Greece were just regurgitated. It was " the imitation of antiquity which must not be interpreted as a rigid concept. " 7 Certain inventions were being introduced in relation to painting during the Renaissance.

Elegant gives a chronology of events in relation to the theory of perspective. 8 " In 1300 Giotto introduced elementary rational perspective. It is legend that Giotto drew freehand a perfect circle, firmly establishing the art of

draftsmanship even though he had no grasp of mathematical science underlying it. In the 1330 and 1400 artists came aware of measurement, using guide marks to help paint the surface of the walls for frescoes. In 1342 - 4, Imbroglio Lorgnette understood the near approximation and definition of a vanishing point.

It was also understood that the ancients had developed some kind of systematic perspective method, (at least in stage design). In 1425 Brucellosis 'peepshows' demonstrated the possibility of exact coincidence of natural vision and pictorial vision in a determined space. In 1435-6, painting could be defined as a kind of window circumscribing the intersection of a flat surface with the pyramid of visual rays. In 1450 experiments in Ariel respective by Flemish painters created recession in landscape backgrounds through a series of increasingly cool and pale color zones.

During 1450 - 60, there was evidence of a mixed perspective system sometimes bifocal in appearance, sometimes in separate planes, sometimes legitimate but usually based on complex calculation. In 1498 the manuscript *On Divine Proportion* by Luck Piccalilli was published. Historians have suggested that the diagrams within this manuscript are attributable to Leonardo da Vinci. " 1 The knowledge gained by artists through these new principles of mathematics and physics were integral in their understanding of the satirical space. The application of perspective was no longer a rudimentary affair but based on legitimate constructs according to certain laws which led to recognition of pictorial space. " 2 Renaissance artists rediscovered human anatomy with the study of Classical Greek and Roman

statuary. " To reproduce the third dimension of space and life of the figures by representing mass in terms of perspective, this optical realism in relation to the material world with correspondingly tonal realism. The pictorial space required the construction of perspective called oceanography which rejected the undefined representation of space in Byzantine and medieval frescoes.

Based on the idea that space was homogeneous, it was conceived of as axial and could be applied to a flat surface, devised by theoreticians of art, it aimed to be natural before becoming artificial that is to say based on geometry. " 3 Valley Reese describes the fresco School of Athens as " sumptuous, a vibrant and vivid intellectual scene. It has vaulted architecture, three Greek arches leading to the beautiful sky beyond. Raphael has put great effort into the space of this painting. There are echoes of the pantheon structure. The edifice is a large space and is placed in genuine antique style. 4 Wisped states that " The architecture contains roman elements but the general semi circular setting having Plato and Aristotle at its centre might be alluding to Pythagoras circumspect" 5 Jill Grayer comments that Raphael " deliberately romanticized Greek space. That he intellectualized it for a purpose. It echoes or imitates the grandest buildings in Rome the golden house of Nero' and it makes references to famous paintings. It does not represent a type of pagan worship but has a rhetorical importance. It is rhetorical fantasy. L Elegant also comments on the paintings mythical capacity. It was not a time of illusion, if myth did come into it, it was defining vital myth. " 2 The Renaissance can be defined by its difference to the previous historical era, The Middle Ages. Elegant states that the " The Middle Ages was an era entirely steeped in darkness followed by the radiant dawn

of the Renaissance. Although the eminent art critic, John Risking saw the Renaissance as no more than the decline of the middle ages and having at its core puritanical origins. " 3 John Risking was not alone in this view as Elegant states that the Nazarene painters ND the Pre-Reappraises also saw the Renaissance in this way.

In the 13th Century, the artist Ghetto represented life and used painting methods that differed from the religious art of the Middle Ages. " He still presented his figures as in a frieze but he was interested in the different contours and relief of the face and delineated these. He introduced the everyday life into tragic or fantastical scenes not so much as the coded legend as the active life of the legendary beings depicted. " 4 Elegant emphasizes the difference between these two periods of history. " The Middle Ages was " stuck in a rut of using tired old Byzantine motifs.

Tuscany was virtually a cemetery of classical ruins. The Renaissance was a time when painting broke free from religious decoration. Its purpose was to no longer educate or to elicit an emotional response from the faithful but to make them participate, through their own personal experiences, in a reconfiguration of sacred history. " 5 Jeanie Anderson acknowledges that religious themes still played a major role in art, during the Renaissance. " Religious art remained the most important subject matter in the Renaissance as it had been in medieval art, but now portraits and stories from

Classical Antiquity were introduced into the artists' repertoire. " 6 Elegant also states " that this was a time when old theoretical frameworks were demolished when the Christian universe, a strained compromise between

Ptolemaic astronomy, Aristotelian cosmology and the literal teachings of the bible collapsed. " 1 The fresco School of Athens was housed in the public library of Pope Julius II. It had been a tradition during this time of the Renaissance to divide books into subjects and classification. The books in the library were divided between subjects such as philosophy, law, poetry, and theology.

These books were housed underneath the frescoes. " The image above would reflect the range of books underneath. It was known that Pope Julius II used or read very few philosophical books and only read law and theology. " 2 Angier Hobbs comments that " the Christian religion is taking into account and adheres to the religious and philosophical thought of the past and embraces it. " Melvyn Bragg states that " the truth is sought by philosophy and found by theology and kept by religion. " 4 This painting was an expression of the time. It denounces authoritarian dogma and all religions and philosophies are being abated. They are influencing each other, a spirit of curiosity which was constantly active. The classical world chimed with a new sensibility one which was totally free of dogma. There was a lack of distinctive judgment during this time and the opening up of thought. " 5 In Raphael's painting School of Athens, the figures are identified as having different ideas. " An energetic debate is being practiced and the scholars are discussing law, astronomy, physics, philosophy, theology, mathematics, and poetry including music. " 6 The Vatican library consisted of classical references, and it protected Greek culture.

It was a refuge of Greek learning, as the scholars of Classical Greece had been forgotten in the intervening years before the Renaissance. " 7 Jill Grayer discusses the figures in the painting, School of Athens. " Hypoxia, a Greek Manipulations philosopher in Roman Egypt can be seen and Heron of Alexandria represents an ancient Greek mathematician and engineer. Penalties, a stoic philosopher represents poetry and Diatom of Matinee is a female philosopher who plays an important role in Plat's Symposium. She is giving Socrates the teaching of love.

It is unusual to have women centrally viewed and to be given such status. Inspirational poets and painters are depicted. Euclid is represented and there are great Christian philosophers, theologians and on the other side of the room are poets and lawyers. The central main figures in the painting are of Aristotle and Plato. Plato is pointing to the sky and Aristotle is pointing towards the ground. Egyptians are personified, as well as Zoroaster who was before the time of Abraham's teachings. Statues of Greek gods are seen on either side, Apollo and Athena.

Classical, pagan, Renaissance scholars and religious leaders are represented. In this painting we have the cream of intellectual thought. There is a harmonious aspect to this world as conflict is left out of the frame. (Who is better than another?) There are plenty of philosophers not paying attention to Plato and Aristotle. It has the complexity of intellectual thought and represents the time. " I Herbert Read in his book The Meaning of Art reinforces this idea. The Renaissance was a time " where minds were consumed by intellectual curiosity. 2 Wisped suggests that " nearly every

Greek philosopher can be found within the painting but determining which are depicted is difficult since Raphael made no designations outside possible likenesses and no anthropometry documents to explain the painting.

Raphael had to invent a system of iconography to allude to various figures for whom there were no traditional visual types. The identities of some of the philosophers in the picture such as Plato or Aristotle are undeniable. Beyond that identification of Raphael's figures have always been hypothetical. 3 Jill Grayer states that "not a lot of people knew about Greek architecture." 4 She goes on to say that "he would not have known these texts... Plato and Aristotle. He was only interested in basic knowledge of tradition. He was not a scholar but a painter. There was no evidence that Raphael had a formal education, or knowledge of Plato and Aristotle philosophy." 1 Although Jill Grayer later mentions that these ideas would have been talked about and debated continuously during the "Raphael had moved to Florence in 1504 and then to Rome in about Renaissance. 1508. Both cities were major centers for High Renaissance Art.

Other artists who worked in Florence were Botanical and Michelangelo and they all relied heavily on strong draftsmanship. Drawing was the basis of their paintings which is confirmed by present day x-ray bibliographic analysis which shows strong drawing beneath the minted surfaces" 2 It was said by one of his friends, Elegant states, that it was "Raphael's greatest joy to be taught and to teach." 3 With such changes and developments in painting and knowledge being disseminated it is unlikely that Raphael would not have been influenced by these new inventions and new discussions.

Giorgio Vassar who was a close friend and contemporary of Raphael claims that he was 'angel like'. " Raphael was modest and good. Gentle and always ready to conciliate, he was considerate of everyone. " 4 Herman J Heckler introduces Vassar as a man who knew and admired Raphael. " He writes with an assurance of a an he knew, respected and loved. " 5 Although Elegant states that such a description is disappointing and uninteresting. Vassar describes him like a professor. " 6 Artists during the Renaissance were perceived as heroic and were just as important as statesmen, 7 so Vicar's comments were not wrong or made out of context.