

PICTURES



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Marriage of the Virgin

***The Marriage of the Virgin* (1504) by Raphael demonstrates the full understanding of linear perspective that had developed by the High Renaissance. Raphael was influenced by both Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, but his work has its own unique sense of balance and clarity.**

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Madonna of the Goldfinch

***Madonna of the Goldfinch* (1505) is an early example of the series of Madonnas that Raphael painted throughout his life. The influence of Leonardo da Vinci on Raphael can be seen in the way the faces are depicted and in the use of *chiaroscuro* (dark and light contrasts). However, Raphael's handling of dark and light is subtler than the *chiaroscuro* of Leonardo's work.**

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School of Athens

The School of Athens (1510-1511) is one several frescoes that Raphael painted for the Stanza della Segnatura, in the Vatican. The fresco, which depicts Plato and Aristotle (centre), as well as other ancient Greek philosophers and scholars, marks the mature style Raphael achieved during his years in Rome (1508-1520). The work is considered a masterpiece in the use of perspective and in the portrayal of the artistic ideals of the High Renaissance.

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Raphael Drawing

Subtle shading, giving the illusion of voluptuous, rounded shape is characteristic of the work of Raphael. Like many other Renaissance drawings, this one, in red chalk, was probably a preparatory study for a future painting.

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Raphael (painter) (1483-1520) (properly, Raffaello Sanzio), Italian painter who was one of the leading artists of the Italian **Renaissance**. He created many of the most significant paintings of the early 16th century and his art was extremely influential for centuries after his death.

Raphael was born in **Urbino** on March 28 or April 6, 1483. His father, the artist Giovanni di Santi, worked mainly for Francesco Gonzaga in **Mantua**, and Raphael spent his youth in a courtly environment. In 1500, so **Vasari** records, Raphael was apprenticed to **Perugino**, a highly respected artist who was one of the first in Italy to paint extensively in **oil**. He employed pure strong colours for his figures, which were imbued with a particularly sweet air of piety, often setting them in landscapes infused with pale, shimmering light.

Raphael's early paintings include large **altarpieces** as well as smaller works, both devotional and secular, many of them made for the court at Urbino. One such is a small panel painting, *St George Slaying the Dragon* (c. 1505, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.); it seems to be connected with Guidobaldo da Montefeltro's election to the Order of the Garter in 1504 and is remarkable for its miniature precision and the knowledge of the work of the Flemish painter Han Memling that it displays. Raphael's earliest large-scale paintings were executed in Città di Castello, which was a day's ride from Urbino. Works such as the *Sposalizio* (or *Marriage of the Virgin*) (1504, Brera, Milan) and the *Coronation of the Virgin* (c. 1503, Vatican Museum, Rome) demonstrate Perugino's influence in

their static composition and sweet figure style. Although intentionally similar in composition to earlier works by Perugino, Raphael's paintings already possessed a dynamic spatial quality that is lacking in the former's work, and his consummate technical mastery and idealizing imagination led to his working in competition with his former master on altarpieces in Perugia, for instance the *Ansidei Altarpiece* (1505, National Gallery, London) made for Bernardino Ansidei for the chapel of St Nicholas of Bari in the Servite church of San Fiorenzo.

Raphael's visit to **Florence** in about 1504 seems to have been motivated by his desire to see the work of **Michelangelo** and **Leonardo da Vinci**, perhaps in order to improve his skills in areas such as anatomy and **perspective**, where he was still inexpert. He did not settle there but visited frequently between 1504 and 1508. His work during these years was extremely varied in nature and scale, ranging from the series of madonnas he painted for individuals, such as the *Small Cowper Madonna* (c. 1505, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) to the large-scale religious works commissioned for churches, such as *The Entombment* (1507, Borghese Gallery, Rome).

Raphael's style developed fully during the years 1504-1508. He lost Perugino's air of sweetness and developed a bolder, more monumental manner that was partly inspired by the works of **Fra Bartolommeo**. While his madonnas were idealized portraits of tranquil women, he also painted real sitters; in *La Muta* (c. 1507, Ducal Palace, Urbino), the subject's finger extends to press against the picture frame, creating an arresting and original pictorial device that reinforces the analogy that a painting is akin to a window.

During his period in Florence, Raphael was influenced by the pyramidal compositions of Leonardo, as can be seen in *La Belle Jardinière* (c. 1507, Musée du Louvre, Paris). This is one of a series of paintings of the Virgin and Child, often with **St John the Baptist**, in an outdoor setting. Leonardo's influence is also apparent in the *Bridgewater Madonna* (c. 1507, Duke of Sutherland Collection, on loan to National Gallery of Scotland); here, the Virgin's sweetly smiling expression and *contraposto* (twisted) pose are derived from Leonardo, while the pose of the Infant Jesus is derived from Michelangelo.

In 1508 Raphael was summoned to **Rome** by Pope **Julius II** in order to decorate a suite of official rooms in the Vatican known as the Stanze. He started with the Stanza della Segnatura, the office in which documents were sealed, producing a series of **frescos** concerned with different aspects of the human intellect. The most famous of these, the *School of Athens* (1509-1511), represents groups of **Greek philosophers** in a monumental Classical setting. Despite the great number and variety of figures, the painting has a remarkably balanced, unified composition, dominated by the eloquently gesturing figures of **Plato** and **Aristotle** in the centre. The other frescos in the Stanza, representing **theology**, **poetry**, and **law**, have a similarly harmonious quality, which also characterizes the Stanza dell'Eliodoro (1511-1514). This was followed by two further rooms, which were mostly executed by Raphael's assistants, in particular **Giulio Romano**, who were also responsible for painting the Vatican Loggie, completed in 1519. During this period Raphael also produced a series of **cartoons** (1515-1516, Royal Collection, on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London) for **tapestries** that were to be hung in the Sistine Chapel. These memorable compositions, representing scenes from the lives of **St Peter** and **St Paul**, were to be enormously influential on later artists.

As well as working for the papacy, Raphael also received important commissions from private patrons, in particular the banker Agostino Chigi, for whom he decorated two chapels, at Santa Maria della Pace (c. 1512-1513) and Santa Maria del Popolo (1516). For Chigi he also adorned the Villa Farnesina with sensual mythological frescos depicting *Galatea* (c. 1511) and scenes from the story of *Cupid and Psyche* (1516-1517), the latter painted so as to create a *trompe l'oeil* effect of tapestries suspended overhead. Raphael's interiors were profoundly influenced by the grotesque style of ornamentation inside the Domus Aurea, the recently excavated palace of the Roman emperor *Nero*. This is particularly apparent in the stuccoed loggia of the Villa Madama, built by Raphael for Cardinal Giulio de' Medici (begun c. 1518). Raphael also experimented with profuse decoration on an exterior in the (now destroyed) Palazzo Branconio dell'Aquila. Such works contrast greatly with the austere beauty of Sant'Eligio degli Orefici, a small church, in the form of a domed Greek cross, which was designed by Raphael and (probably) *Bramante* around 1509. While the church's lucid geometrical structure and restrained decoration typify the High Renaissance, the later buildings clearly anticipate the complexity of *Mannerism*. During this period Raphael also produced memorable works on panel and canvas, including a number of portraits: these included a remarkably frank depiction of the aged *Pope Julius II* (c. 1511, National Gallery, London), as well as *Pope Leo X and Two Cardinals* (c. 1519, Uffizi, Florence) and the nobleman *Baldassare Castiglione* (c. 1516, Musée du Louvre, Paris). Raphael also executed a number of extraordinary altarpieces, including the celebrated *Sistine Madonna* (c. 1513, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden), a magnificent image of the Virgin and Child appearing among radiant clouds, above two of the most engaging putti (cherubs) in Renaissance art. Equally extraordinary is *The Transfiguration* (1517-1520, Vatican, Rome), completed by Giulio Romano after Raphael's death, which greatly influenced the crowded, dynamic compositions of later Mannerist painters.

Raphael's death in Rome on April 6, 1520, cut short an immensely successful and productive career. His work exemplifies the confidence and originality of the High Renaissance. Like Michelangelo, he produced works of supreme harmony and grandeur, while also on occasion introducing qualities that would later be associated with Mannerism. Through the engravings of *Marcantonio Raimondi*, his compositions became widely known throughout his lifetime, and his influence on academic painters in subsequent centuries was inestimable.