



Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel

Andrew Graham-Dixon

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You cannot stand underneath the masterwork that is the Sistine Chapel without considering the genius and painstaking work that went into its creation. Michelangelo Buonarroti never wanted to paint the Sistine Chapel, though. Appointed by the temperamental Julius II, Michelangelo believed the suspiciously large-scale project to be a plot for failure conspired by his rivals and the "Warrior Pope." After all, Michelangelo was not a painter—he was a sculptor. The noble artist reluctantly took on the daunting task that would damage his neck, back, and eyes (if you have ever strained to admire the real thing, you know). Andrew Graham-Dixon tells the story behind the famous painted ceiling over which the great artist painfully toiled for four long years.

Linking Michelangelo's personal life to his work on the Sistine Chapel, Graham-Dixon describes Michelangelo's unique depiction of the Book of Genesis, tackles ambiguities in the work, and details the painstaking work that went into Michelangelo's magnificent creation. Complete with rich, full-color illustrations and Graham-Dixon's articulate narrative, *Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel* is an indispensable and significant piece of art criticism. It humanizes this heavenly masterpiece in a way that every art enthusiast, student, and professional can understand and appreciate.

Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel Details

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From Reader Review Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel for online ebook

Netta says

This book could be read by some handsome narrator with BBC documentary-ish velvety voice. It'll definitely make the whole thing much better and appropriately pathetic.

Zheluo Cai says

Although Michelangelo was initially more renowned for his sculptures than paintings, Andrew Graham-Dixon provides us with rare insights into the political and personal planning processes before the eventual commencement of the artist's renowned masterpieces on the Sistine Chapel's ceiling, and 25 years later, the Last Judgment on the altar wall. Although only 30 years-old when he started on the Sistine Chapel, this project established Michelangelo as a master painter in his own right. Graham-Dixon's detailed interpretation of the various Biblical scenes and scholarly artistic commentary, draws the veil aside for us to appreciate Michelangelo's accompanying spirituality as he decided on his particular graphic portrayal of each scene fraught with meanings. What comes through is a deeply religious man, caught up the reality of the spiritual upheavals of his day as he sought a personal relationship with his God.

Marie says

I read this on a kindle which was a big mistake. I could not read without continually referencing the images the author spoke of - so I was back and forth between kindle and computer screen. I really wanted to know more about Michelangelo after reading, from a biographical standpoint. Some of the speculations about the frescoes seem like a far stretch but then again, art can never really be objective.

Eman AlRaesi says

This book talks about the sistine chapel and michealangelo fresco drawings, so if you're interested in the artist it doesn't say much about him. still i recommend it, it analayizes the fresco drawings from a very religious chritian view (taking into consideration that michealangelo was a devout catholic). the author tries his best to help us understand what michealangelo meant with his frescos, what's the message he's trying to send. a paper pack art book with some coloured photographs in an affordable price, written in an easy language and you don't have to be an art expert to understand it.

Susan says

Very interesting, insightful, and readable explbanation of Michelangelo's works.

Richard Booth says

I found this work historical, biographical, and hermeneutic. The author brings the Sistine Chapel, including the Last Judgment, to life in interesting ways. He utilizes metaphor, mythology, and interpretation to integrate his ideas and others' interpretations of the frescoes. His historical sources are varied, but he utilizes the writings of two of Michelangelo's contemporaries primarily for biographical purposes. The work is straightforward and enlightening, and is very well written and sourced.

Joe says

The way Andrew Graham-Dixon writes is one that echoes what he writes about. His passion and choices of words shine through. His Caravaggio, grittier, more human, his Michelangelo majestic and noble.

An excellent introductory biography of Michelangelo, focusing on the two contemporary sources, Condivi and Vasari, whilst not ignoring more recent scholarship about Michelangelo's personal life. Namely, with the use of his letters.

With the shrouded idea of Michelangelo firmly revealed, one can explore the beauty of the Sistine ceiling. From the descriptions conjured by Graham-Dixon, one can only imagine the spectacle of seeing it new, pure, untainted by mass tourism.

A Michelangelo rises. Not just as a craftsman, but as a theologian. Not relying on speculation, Graham-Dixon does not undermine Michelangelo's contribution to the ceiling. His theological knowledge confirmed by Condivi.

However, this book is immensely safe. A theological vision of the ceiling formed from Michelangelo scholarship of past years. What else Michelangelo has in store for us, one can only wait. His perception of himself, his place in the world, and the image he created of himself, will continue to pull us like the Sun does the Earth.

And, to be a proper Andrew Graham-Dixon fan, I leave you with an Italian passage with no translation.

"Io vidi Più folgor vivi e vincenti
far di noi centro e di sé far corona"

Paradiso, Canto. X, 64-65.

ej cullen says

Well...how can you have a book under 200 pages that is...well, wordy? Still, worth reading if you have an interest. You don't learn much about Michelangelo, other than he considered himself a sculptor much more than a painter, but was way-layed to the paints by the powers that were and the remuneration they offered - but you do get a somewhat detailed verbal description of the ceiling and walls as depicting Michelangelo's

singular take on the Old Testament. Nice color photos

Kerry says

Essential reading for those who have been to, or are planning to visit, the Sistine Chapel. It might also be a nice guide to have along if you happen to *be* under Michelangelo's famous ceiling. This well-written, accessible, and thorough analysis of Michelangelo's thought processes and intentions, as concluded through research documents and a study of the images, further deepens an understanding of the Sistine Chapel ceiling's many parts. The descriptions are thoughtful and well-reasoned, and the background on Michelangelo serves to support the arguments made. Also intriguing is the discussion about the order in which the sections of the ceiling were completed, how Michelangelo's style progressed, and how he greatly diverged from the representations of biblical scenes created by his predecessors and used invention and imagination to create completely new interpretations of familiar imagery, symbolism, and stories. Anyone who stands under the Sistine Chapel ceiling knows they are looking at a work of profound genius, intimacy, and careful thought, but this book underscores Michelangelo's aptitude for rendering not only figures in space, but for bringing to those figures, much like in God's creation of Adam, all of the complexity, turmoil, and emotion of life.

PMP says

Wasn't expecting this, but this account made me cackle out loud a few times. What a character Michelangelo was. I appreciated the delicious lardons of bitchiness -- they could just as easily have been left out, and I'm glad the author had the good taste not to. Enjoy!

Castles says

it's a very interesting read into Michelangelo's masterpiece. Dixon interpretation is very smart and fluid and he's a pleasure to read.

the book, while very short, can actually be used as a guide if you're going to visit the Sistine Chapel. I must admit though that Ross King's take on Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel is much more informative and shed more light on the roots of the work and the history of Italy, as long with the pope's campaigns.

Carol says

Andrew-Dixon details the history and project of Michelangelo depicting the Biblical stories on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel with all its subtleties and complexities. I wish this book would have been available when I saw this work of art in 1980. Andrew-Dixon portrays the various scenes in a closeness not available to a visitor to the chapel but just knowing the detail would be an asset. The Sistine ceiling is so large and overwhelming, it is hard to take in on a short visit.

I was impressed with the emotion Andrew-Dixon ascribes to Michelangelo's story telling. He gives credit to

biographies written during the years the art was done that give the artist and the stories an extraordinary aliveness. However, Andrew-Dixon deserves credit for his ability to formulate and depict the project as well as the life of the artist. He intertwined the art and the political aura of the day succinctly making the story have a most excellent fullness.

Betsy says

In college I took a course on art history, which led to visiting, upon graduation, many of the artworks in Europe that I had read about. One of my premiere destinations was the Vatican and the Sistine Chapel so this book appealed to me when I saw it. It has pictures of various aspects of the ceiling and the 'Last Judgment', however, they are small so it is sometimes difficult to make out what the author is talking about. He concentrates on Michelangelo's interpretation of Christianity and how he presented it in fresco. Since the ceiling focuses on the events and people leading up to the time of Christ, it necessitated following closely some of his arguments. Unfortunately, that is not exactly what I was looking for. It is a short book, but might be better suited to those who are interested in the religious aspects of this great artistic work.

He does discuss some of the sculptures that Michelangelo created. The fame of the 'David' and the 'Pieta' need no explanation, but my favorite work is the 'Madonna of Bruges'. I made a special trip to Bruges just to see it. It was more than worth the effort.

Brad says

An informative book that develops a clear understanding of the artwork and the history of the chapel without being academic. This book is for the casual reader, not for the academic looking for analysis or critical insight. If reading this book is a consideration, that should be more than obvious at first glance.

Mary B. Costa says

Gift of faith through art.

Amazing description of the life and work of Michelangelo showing how his art and his faith grew as he worked.
