

Michelangelo Buonarroti

1475-1564

Italian painter and sculptor, Michelangelo, was the greatest Renaissance artist of all time. His greatest love was the study of the human body, both in painting and in sculpture. He concentrated on observing the human body and was often allowed into hospitals to study bodies of those who had died.



Portrait of Michelangelo at age 60 *by* Jacopino del Conte

Florentine sculptor, painter, poet and architect Michelangelo was born at Caprese, Italy where his father was a Florentine official. Michelangelo was trained in Florence in the style of a fresco painter and then studied at the Medici School where he became a sculptor. He was friends with many interesting people at the Medici School including philosophers, artists, poets, and writers.



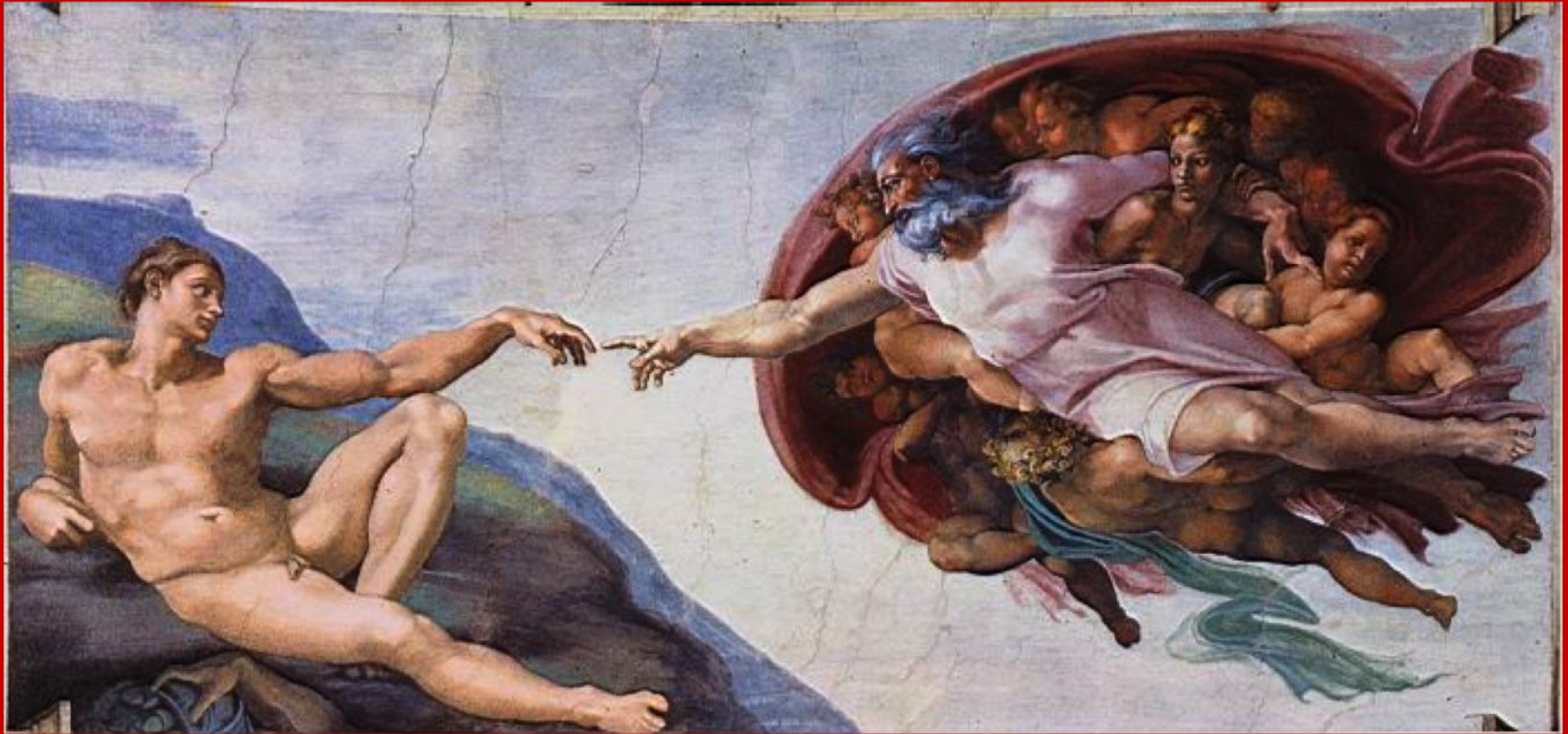
Sistine Chapel

As Michelangelo traveled and worked as an artist, he became highly well-known and was asked by Pope Julius II to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican with frescoes, a technique he knew well.



Sistine Chapel Ceiling

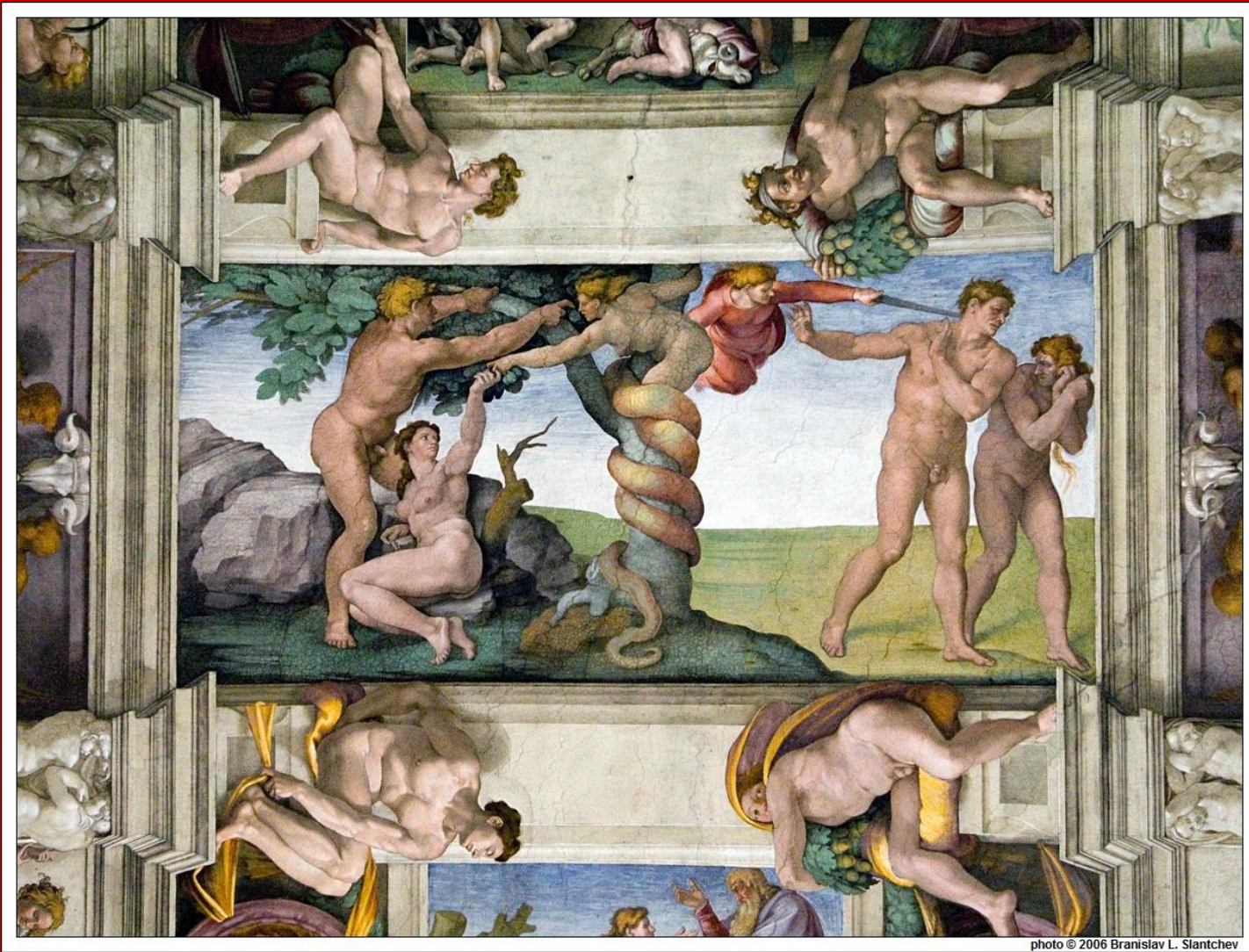
However, the job was an enormous undertaking that took over four years of working single-handed while lying on his back (or looking up with his head tilted at an awkward angle). There are a total of 343 figures on the ceiling. To those who knew him, Michelangelo was called “The Divine Michelangelo”.



Sistine Chapel: Creation of Adam

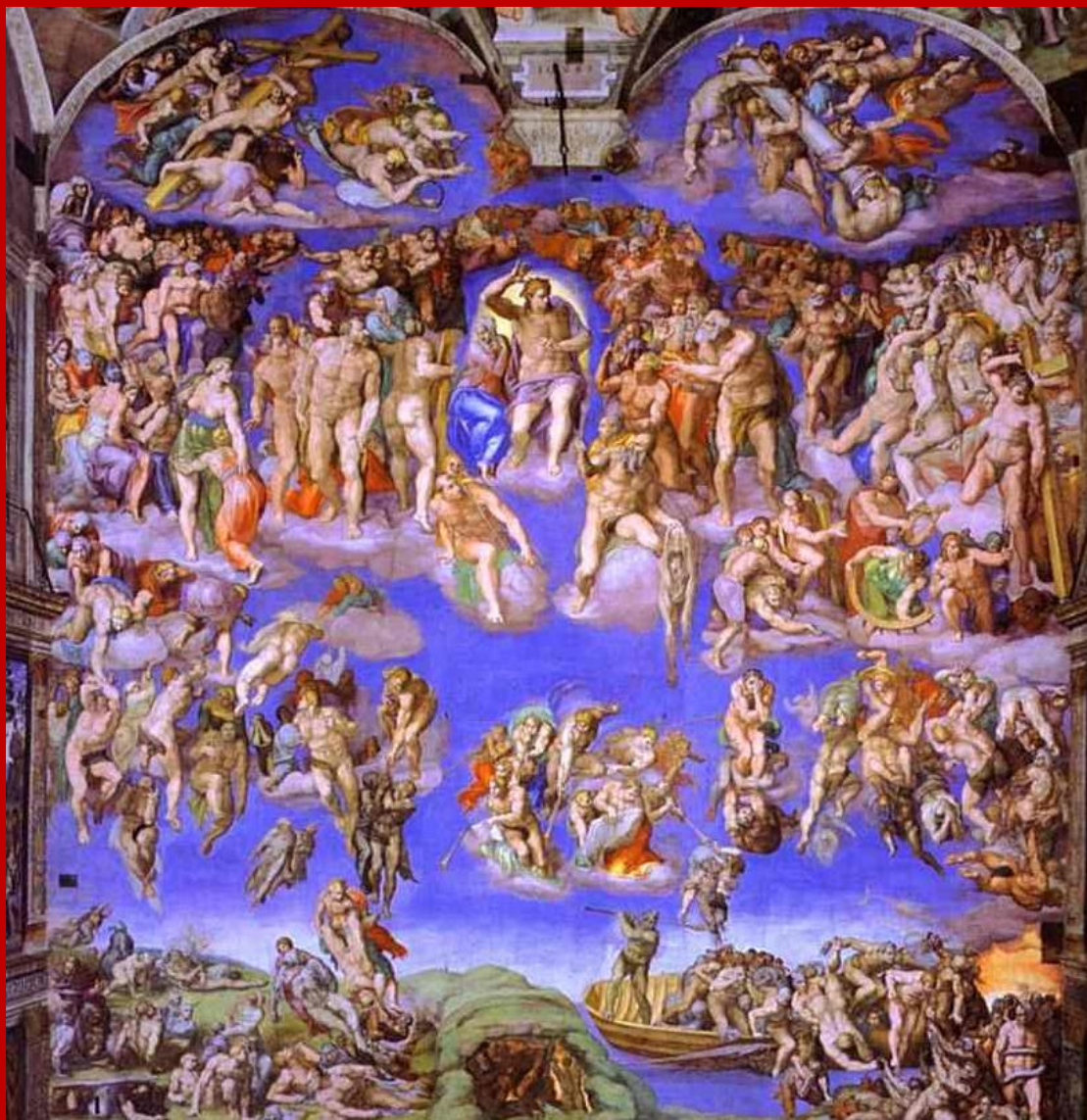
The art technique Michelangelo used was called “fresco”, or painting on wet plaster walls and ceilings. When the plaster is damp, the paint is absorbed into the plaster and gives a longer lasting finished work.

It is said the Michelangelo read and reread the Old Testament while he was painting the ceiling, drawing his inspiration from the words of scripture, rather than from the traditions of sacred art



Sistine Chapel: Adam and Eve

Central to the ceiling decoration are nine scenes from the Book of Genesis.



Sistine Chapel Altar Wall: The Last Judgment

In his 70's, Michelangelo wrote to his nephew:

Many believe – and I believe – that I have been designated for this work by God. In spite of my old age, I do not want to give it up; I work out of love for God and I put all my hope in Him.