

Definition: **Raphael** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

(Raphael Sanzio or Raphael Santi) Italian painter, one of the finest artists of the High Renaissance. Born in Urbino, Raphael absorbed humanism as a child. One of his most important commissions was the decoration of the four *stanze* (rooms) in the Vatican. He only completed two of these but the first, the *Stanza della Segnatura*, gave him the chance to exercise his skills to the full. The room contains two large frescos, the *School of Athens* and the *Disputa*, both of which show Raphael's mastery of perspective. After Bramante's death, he became architect to St Peter's, Rome.



Image from: [The Madonna of the Pinks \('La Madonna dei Garofani'\) in National Gallery Collection](#)

Summary Article: **Raphael (1483-1520)**

From *The Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization*

Raphael was an Italian Renaissance painter, and he is considered one of the greatest and most influential painters of all time. He was born in Urbino on April 6, 1483. The arts were very influential in his hometown, and his earliest painting influence was his father who was a court painter for the Duke. After leaving Urbino, Raphael's life can be divided into three time periods based on his location and his works.

In 1499, Raphael went to Perugia and became a student, assistant, and apprentice to Pietro Perugino. Raphael, known for learning others' techniques quickly and making them his own, acquired his master's style and produced many works that were so similar that historians have a hard time figuring out which paintings are by Raphael and which are not. Important works of this period include *Wedding of the Virgin*, *Mond Crucifixion*, and *Coronation of the Virgin*. Raphael is generally considered a “master” by 1501, meaning that he was fully trained.

While he led a somewhat nomadic life working in various cities across Italy, Raphael spent most of his time in Florence from 1504 to 1508. Here, he studied the work of more established painters of his time (Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Fra Bartolommeo). Once again, he learned their methods and techniques and made them uniquely his own. His painting transitioned from rigid geometrical images to a more animated and informal style during his time in Florence. Well-known works from this period are *Madonna of the Meadow*, *Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, and *Deposition of Christ*.

Raphael is best known for his commissioned works in Rome. In 1508, he moved to Rome after accepting a commission from Pope Julius II at the suggestion of the chief architect of St. Peter's Basilica, Donato Bramante. Raphael would spend the rest of his life working in Rome. He was first brought to Rome to complete frescoes in four small *stanze* of the Vatican Palace. The first was the *Stanza della Segnatura* and is considered Raphael's masterpiece. The work elaborates scenes on the themes of theology, philosophy, poetry, and justice. The *School of Athens*, part of this first *stanza*, is widely regarded as Raphael's greatest work. He continued his four *stanze* paintings throughout the rest of his life, but he was commissioned for many other Vatican artworks and for other projects in Rome.

After the death of Pope Julius II in 1513 and the ascension of Leo X to the papacy, Raphael's influence and responsibilities increased. He dedicated most of his time to the Vatican works, but Raphael was

also known for sculptures, drawings, architecture, cartoons, printings, and for his unprecedented 50 member workshop. After the death of Bramante, Raphael was made the chief architect of St. Peter's Basilica in 1514 and a year later he was appointed director of excavations and antiquities in and near Rome. Other important works from his Roman period are numerous — *Sistine Madonna*, personal paintings of both popes, and Chigi Chapel. Raphael died in Rome on April 6, 1520 (Good Friday, his birthday) at the age of 37. He is buried in the Pantheon.

SEE ALSO: Bramante, Donato; Perugino, Pietro (1448-1523)

References and Suggested Readings

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