

# ART

(Selected by Daniel Day)

(Continued from Last Week)

In the year of 1512, Michel Angelo completed the ceiling frescoes of the Sistine chapel in the Vatican, which mark the climax of the high renaissance, after which all of the worthy accomplishments of the historic Italian schools of painting were inevitable consequences of the impetus given before that date. Further, it may be said that the very brilliancy of the artists living and working at the brief period of the climax was, in itself, a cause of the decline and sterilization of their immediate successors.

As a consequence of civic strife in Florence and the election of a strong pope, Julius II (1503-13), artistic supremacy were transferred to Rome. There the newly elected pontiff wished to glorify his family and to make memorable his own reign by the creations of great monuments. Therefore, for the adornment of his papal palace, the Vatican commissioned Michel Angelo to decorate the walls and ceilings of the chapel, named the Sistine in honor of his uncle, Pope Sixtus IV (1471-84). At the same time, he chose the more comprehensible and pliable genius, Raphael, to embellish with murals a spacious chamber, which is now believed to have been the private papal library and study. Four years later both artists had finished their commissions, which represented in the case of each his best mural work.

Michael Angelo illustrated the history of the world from the creation to the deluge, as told in the scriptures on the flat panels of the vaulted ceiling of the chapel, filling the triangular spaces between the arches with majestic rhythmic figures, male and female, symbolizing Hebrew prophets and pagan sibyls who foretold the birth of Christ. Raphael represented the subjects of theology, philosophy and the "Triumph of Poetry."

[The end.]



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