

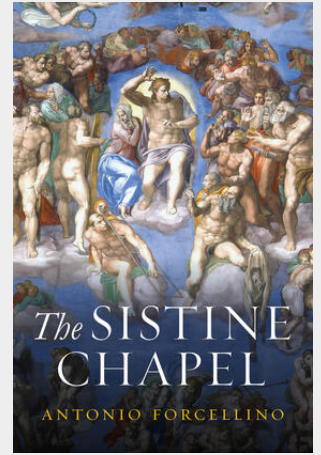
Forcellino

## The Sistine Chapel

History of a Masterpiece

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The Sistine Chapel is one of the world's most magnificent buildings, and the frescos that decorate its ceiling and walls are a testimony to the creative genius of the Renaissance. Two generations of artists worked at the heart of Christianity, over the course of several decades in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, to produce this extraordinary achievement of Western civilization. In this book, the art historian and restorer Antonio Forcellino tells the remarkable story of the Sistine Chapel, bringing his unique combination of knowledge and skills to bear on the conditions that led to its creation. Forcellino shows that Pope Sixtus IV embarked on the project as an attempt to assert papal legitimacy in response to Mehmed II's challenge to the Pope's spiritual leadership. The lower part of the chapel was decorated by a consortium of master painters whose frescoes, so coherent that they seem almost to have been painted by a single hand, represent the highest expression of the Quattrocento Tuscan workshops. Then, in 1505, Sixtus IV's nephew, Julius II, imposed a change in direction. Having been captivated by the prodigious talent of a young Florentine sculptor, Julius II summoned Michelangelo Buonarroti to Rome and commissioned him to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Two decades later, Michelangelo returned to paint The Last Judgement, which covers the wall behind the altar. Michelangelo's revolutionary work departed radically from tradition and marked a turning point in the history of Western art. Antonio Forcellino brings to life the wonders of the Sistine Chapel by describing the aims and everyday practices of the protagonists who envisioned it and the artists who created it, reconstructing the material history that underlies this masterpiece.



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