

Curtis M. Kularski  
ART115 - 62 [2008 Fall]  
Writing Assignment 1 - Raphael

Raphael was born Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino in 1483, but is always referenced as Raphael or Raffaello. He is considered to be one of three masters of the High Renaissance. He is the simplest of the three, focusing his talents on only architecture and painting, whereas the others took on engineering, science and mathematics. Raphael's most frequently executed paintings were religious, ranging from Madonnas to Pope Leo X with two cardinals. A large amount of his work was for popes and their associates.

Raphael's Maddalena rivals Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa. In my opinion, Raphael's Maddalena is more realistic and less idealized. There is nothing perfect about the model for the painting, and she is in a very natural, outdoor setting, which I find to be more appealing than the landscape behind Mona Lisa. It is believable to me that Maddalena is in the location depicted, whereas the Mona Lisa has an appearance of being a lifelike figure painted in front of another painting. The Maddalena appears to be genuine in her emotion. An area of criticism for the Maddalena is the shadows. The shadows on the figure do not correspond to the shadows of the landscape or to the light of the sky.

I am fascinated by "St. George Fighting the Dragon" (1505). Raphael has stopped motion, and captured what could be a terrifying battle of myth and fantasy. The musculature of the horse is very well defined, although, in a very subtle way, giving the appearance of distress for the horse as well as St. George. The broken pole below the horse gives clues to the moments just before Raphael froze the motion of these

characters. The geometric alignment of the sword, St. George's arm and the dragon's head create a tension, and an anticipation of the dragon soon losing his head to the blade.

My favorite of Raphael's paintings is "The School of Athens". This painting is very inspirational to me, and is a constant reminder that no one field of academic exploration stands alone, they all come together to create a harmonious understanding of the world. At over sixteen feet tall, it is a fresco of a scale to create a feeling of being in the same room as the philosophers. Raphael placed Plato and Aristotle at the top of the stairs, bringing with them the knowledge of ancient Greek philosophy, as if to share it with the people living during the Renaissance.

Raphael was very talented and I believe he earned his place among the masters of his time. His work is full of emotion. His choice of color and the softness of its application allows a look at many things that could be harsh (such as a blade in air), as being part of a consistent seamless painting.