

# LA CAPPELLA SISTINA

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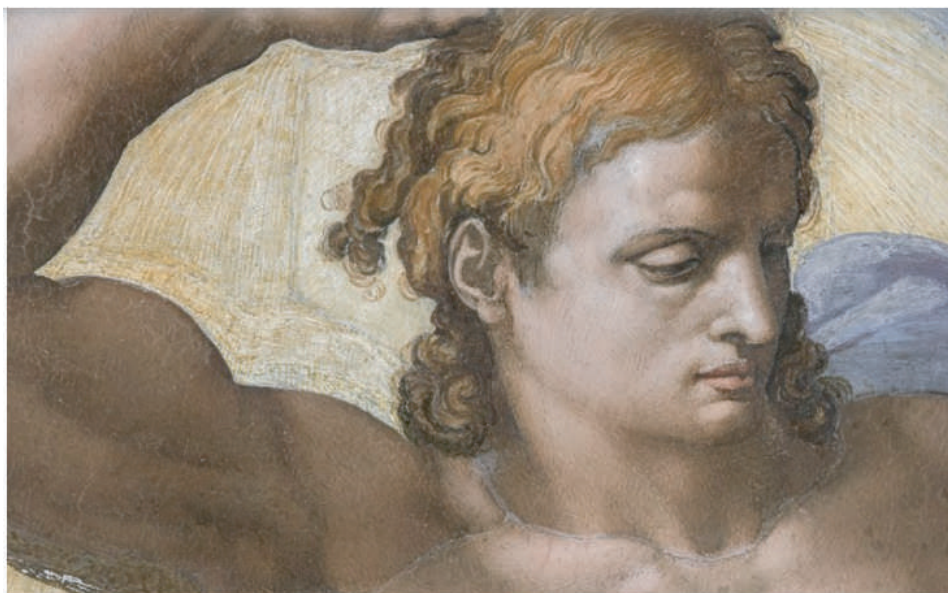
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HISTORY SCIENCE INNOVATION ARTS & CULTURE TRAVEL

## SMARTNEWS *Keeping you current*

### This \$22,000 Book Features Life-Size Photos of the Sistine Chapel's Art

The pricey tome consists of three 25-pound, two-foot-tall volumes



Detail of Michelangelo's *The Last Judgment* fresco (© Vatican Museums)

By [Isis Davis-Marks](#)

[SMITHSONIANMAG.COM](#)

OCTOBER 29, 2020



**A**nyone who's visited the [Sistine Chapel](#) can testify that it's difficult to examine the space's [meticulously painted frescoes](#) up close—partly because of the [high volume of people](#) in the chapel at any given time, but also due to the sheer height of its [68-foot-tall](#) ceiling.

Luckily, a soon-to-be released book titled [The Sistine Chapel](#) invites art lovers to take a closer look at the famed Vatican City masterpieces from the comfort of home (or, in this case, a museum or library).

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As Katie Rothstein writes for *artnet News*, the three-volume tome—the product of a collaboration between New York-based publisher [Callaway Arts and Entertainment](#), the Vatican Museums, and Italian publisher [Scripta Maneant](#)—features the “most precise images of the artwork ever produced,” rendering paintings by [Michelangelo](#), [Sandro Botticelli](#), [Perugino](#) and other artists on a 1:1 scale with 99.4 percent color accuracy.

This level of detail, however, comes at a steep price: \$22,000 (excluding tax, but inclusive of shipping and handling).

“[I]t’s the world’s most expensive impulse buy,” Callaway founder Nicholas Callaway tells *Publishers Weekly*’s Liz Hartman only half-jokingly.

According to a [statement](#), publishers plan on printing just 1,999 copies—including 600 English sets—of the 822-page book. Each of the three volumes measures 24 by 17 inches and weighs a whopping 25 pounds.

“You’re seeing it at the same size, at arm’s length, as a viewer as if you were a bird sitting on Michelangelo’s shoulder,” Callaway tells *artnet News*. “If you put it in the realm of unique things, or if you put it in the context of the art market, \$22,000 is not an expensive work of art.”

*The Sistine Chapel* represents the culmination of a [five-year endeavor](#). Per the statement, photographers took more than 270,000 high-resolution images of the chapel over 67 consecutive nights when the house of worship was closed to visitors. The team then used imaging software to seamlessly stitch together each individual frame.

Callaway initially planned to produce an updated version of a similarly themed 1991 book. Sold for \$1,000 (around \$1,900 today), this luxury item stood 17 inches tall, weighed 30 pounds and featured 644 full-color photographs, as Rick Hampson noted for the [Associated Press](#) at the time.

After bringing his idea to the Vatican, Callaway learned that a “new, unprecedented digitization process” was already underway with [Scripta Maneant](#), reports *artnet News*. He managed to join the project and secure printing rights to 600 English copies.

Though *The Sistine Chapel*’s high price tag is cost prohibitive, to say the least, Callaway tells *Publishers Weekly* that he hopes to reach a wide audience by placing the volumes at museums, libraries, universities and other cultural institutions.

“One of our primary goals is to place a significant portion of the edition in institutions where it will be available to everyone for generations to come,” the publisher explains to *artnet News*. “It’s a work for the world.”

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