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From Nana's Back Porch: Famous Artist Michelangelo

Hello, this is Nana from my back porch. Thank you for joining me today. You are all artists!

Hello and welcome. This is Nana, and I'm speaking to you from, of course, my favorite place, which is my back porch. Now, I'm going to have to compete with the chipmunk who is chirping in the background. He's trying to tell someone that there's a cat in the neighborhood and to be careful. So, we're just going to go ahead and today we're going to talk about one of my most favorite, favorite artists of all, who is Michelangelo.

I have been very privileged to see a few of his most famous works, and I'm gonna talk to you about that today, and I want you to just close your eyes at times and imagine you're with me as we look at these famous, famous artworks.

The very first one that we're gonna talk about today is the one that Michelangelo painted in the Sistine Chapel in Rome in the Vatican. I wish that I could put into words what exactly it was like to see something that you've read about all your life. Perhaps you are one of the lucky ones, as I am, to have already seen this wonderful painting. And "painting" doesn't even encompass what exactly this work of art is.

The chapel is the location for the Papal Conclaves. The Sistine Chapel is. It has a famous fireplace in there, so every time the princes of the church vote for a new Pope, they take their ballots and they set fire to them in this fireplace, and the smoke goes up the chimney and it either says, "No, we don't have a new Pope," or, "yes, we do." It has been the scene of worldwide, worldwide attention, and it still is every day. The art that is contained in this tiny state is stunning.

Michelangelo painted the depiction of Bible scenes on the Sistine Chapel, and it took over four years, from 1508 to 1512. There are nine scenes from Genesis. The Creation of Adam and The Last Judgment are the most famous. Michelangelo read and reread the Old Testament while he was painting the ceiling, drawing his inspiration from the words of the scripture,

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rather from the established traditions of art of the day. There's a total of 343 figures that are painted, and the ceiling has held up well for five centuries.

Now, I'm gonna take you on a trip back in time, 500 years ago. You are standing on a wobbly scaffold, 60 feet up in the air. Now that's high, friends. I don't do well with heights, but Michelangelo did. He designed the scaffolding himself. Your canvas to paint on is not a canvas at all. It's a ceiling in a chapel and it's not well lit and it's curved, too. I mean, there's a whole lot of things, negatives, to start off with. Your assignment is to paint standing up, brace your legs, and you work looking up at the ceiling.

You have to paint in fresco. Fresco is a type of painting technique that was used 500 years ago. This requires real physical effort. Each day, the artist has to mix up a batch of plaster and trowel it onto the wall, and then hurry, hurry, hurry to finish his painting before the plaster dries. And painting a ceiling is really hard because everything must be lifted and painted above your head.

Now at the very center of this painting is the birth of Adam. It is one of the most recognizable paintings in the world. As you look up, you see a sweeping, majestic God reaching his hand towards Adam, his very own creation. Who just, to me at least, he looked like he was almost asleep and just relaxed. Not awake yet because he hasn't been born. He's just been created, and his hand is reaching, though, toward this thunderous looking God. And their fingers are just seconds apart. God is reaching toward Adam. All time stops in anticipation.
All the other parts of the Sistine Chapel paintings just disappear as you gaze in awe upwards. You are surrounded by hundreds of gazing tourists. Well, when I visited this was pre-pandemic times. People of all ages and nationalities. They strain their necks at this glorious sight. It is real. It is really real. I saw it.

And I saw and wept unashamedly standing in front of the Pietà, Michelangelo's breathtakingly beautiful carving of Mary, the mother of Christ holding her son. The body of her crucified son, Jesus. How could marble almost breathe? What otherworldly talent gifted our world with such beauty? It is there in the Vatican also.

The privilege of gazing at the David in the Academia Gallery in Florence is just unforgettable. Michelangelo decided to have this sculpture represent David, moments before his confrontation with Goliath. So you see a young David, I pictured him after looking at the sculpture myself at about 15 or 16 years old. And he's ready to hit the giant, holding a stone in his right hand, with a sling rested on his left shoulder. The tension of this young shepherd in front of his terrible enemy was represented by Michelangelo with details like the intense expression in his eyes and a lowered brow and an accurate contraction of the muscles showing veins where blood would flow, all of this in marble.

And the most stunning thing is, is that Michelangelo always considered himself more of a sculptor than a painter. This was a man blessed with gifts far beyond what most mortals are given.

And the most stunning, and I use this word a lot and I apologize, but it was stunning. The most stunning to me is the fact that David's eyes are so different. This sculpture of this young man, his pupils in his eyes are carved as hearts. Hearts, like Valentine hearts. I couldn't tell you how big the hearts were. It really doesn't matter. The level of the detail that Michelangelo instilled into this sculpture is amazing.

He was able to visualize in his mind's eye before creating it in reality. Could it be a 500 year old Valentine to all the next generations of us? The generations of people to view David's beauty? After all, the Bible says David was a man after God's heart.

Thank you for this time. I'm so glad you joined me. And I hope that you will study more of Michelangelo's beautiful art that is such a gift to mankind. Let's do this again soon! And always, always remember You ARE an Artist!

Love, Nana.

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"There are no mistakes in chalk pastel art!" - Nana

Thank you for listening, artist friends! Please leave a review and share this with a friend. We invite you to join us in the You ARE an Artist Clubhouse at ChalkPastel.com where we have over 500 (Yes, 500!) video art lessons. We would also love for you to join us on Instagram, Facebook, and more, and be sure to tag us when you share photos of your artwork. We cannot wait to see. I'll be talking to you again soon.

Note: Nana now has over 700 video art lessons in the Clubhouse!

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