

The trick

In April 1508, Michelangelo was summoned back to Rome by **Julius II**, but he was still not able to start on the papal tomb. In fact Julius II had a new job for him: painting twelve figures of apostles and some decorations on the **ceiling of the Sistine Chapel**. Buonarroti, who had always regarded himself as a sculptor, would now have to learn the art of the fresco. It seems that the pope had been advised to make this move by **Bramante** and other artists working at his court, who did not take kindly to Michelangelo's presence: «And this thing they did with malice, to distract the pope from matters of sculpture; and since they were sure that he, either by not accepting this undertaking, would turn the pope against him, or by accepting it would do much less creditable work than **Raphael of Urbino**, to whom, out of hatred for Michelangelo, they gave every support.»

At first, Buonarroti tried to turn down the commission, but in vain. And then, during the realization of the work, that mysterious liking that the artist and the pope had, at bottom, for one another yielded its fruit. Julius II let himself be swayed by Michelangelo's creative frenzy, and both were carried away by their enthusiasm over more and more ambitious plans. So, Michelangelo was given *carte blanche*: by October 31st, 1512, he had painted over 300 figures on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.