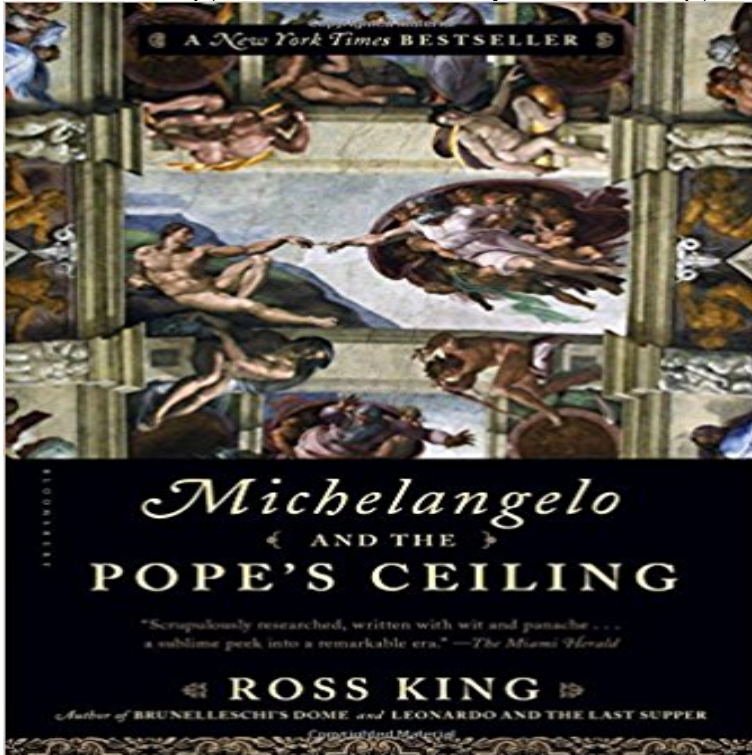


Michelangelo and the Popes Ceiling



In 1508, despite strong advice to the contrary, the powerful Pope Julius II commissioned Michelangelo Buonarroti to paint the ceiling of the newly restored Sistine Chapel in Rome. Despite having completed his masterful statue David four years earlier, he had little experience as a painter, even less working in the delicate medium of fresco, and none with challenging curved surfaces such as the Sistine ceilings vaults. The temperamental Michelangelo was himself reluctant: He stormed away from Rome, incurring Julius's wrath, before he was eventually persuaded to begin. Michelangelo and the Popes Ceiling recounts the fascinating story of the four extraordinary years he spent laboring over the twelve thousand square feet of the vast ceiling, while war and the power politics and personal rivalries that abounded in Rome swirled around him. A panorama of illustrious figures intersected during this time—the brilliant young painter Raphael, with whom Michelangelo formed a rivalry; the fiery preacher Girolamo Savonarola and the great Dutch scholar Desiderius Erasmus; a youthful Martin Luther, who made his only trip to Rome at this time and was disgusted by the corruption all around him. Ross King blends these figures into a magnificent tapestry of day-to-day life on the ingenious Sistine scaffolding and outside in the upheaval of early-sixteenth-century Italy, while also offering uncommon insight into the connection between art and history.

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