

RAPHAEL

ARTIST GUIDE

Paintings, frescoes, drawings, prints and Vatican design

TheHistoryOfArt.org

Raphael

Artist Guide



Published by TheHistoryOfArt.org, 2026.

Written and edited by Tom Gurney.

This free guide draws on the Waterhouse+ Raphael pages prepared for TheHistoryOfArt.org. It is intended as a substantial learning guide and a companion to the full online articles.

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How to use this guide

This is a substantial doorway into the Raphael cluster, not a replacement for the full online articles.

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Use the guide as a route through Raphael's life, major paintings, Vatican frescoes, drawings, prints, architecture and workshop culture. The online pages carry the fuller references, images, annotation panels, discussion sections and live internal links.

The Waterhouse+ rebuild gives each route its own source-led job. A finished panel, a fresco bay, a tapestry cartoon, an engraved print, a drawing study, a later copy and an architectural design do not carry the same evidence.

For fast orientation, start with the homepage, Biography, Paintings and Prints. Then move into the Vatican rooms, Madonnas, portraits and drawings according to the route catalogue at the back of this guide.

Raphael at a glance

A concise orientation before the guide turns to the major routes.

FULL NAME	Raffaello Sanzio, known in English as Raphael
BORN	1483, Urbino
DIED	6 April 1520, Rome
MAIN CENTRES	Urbino, Perugia, Florence, Rome and the Vatican
FIELDS	Painting, fresco, drawing, architecture, tapestry design and print-related design culture
CORE WORKS	The School of Athens, Sistine Madonna, Transfiguration, The Three Graces and St Cecilia
READING CAUTION	The guide keeps object identity, workshop execution, later copies, prints, cartoons and image-source caveats visible where...

Life, workshop and Rome

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Raphael's life was short enough to fit within a single generation and large enough to alter the practice of European art. He was born in the small court city of Urbino, became an independent master while still a teenager, absorbed the leading art of Umbria and Florence, and arrived in Rome at about twenty-five. Twelve years later he had transformed papal rooms, devised tapestries for the Sistine Chapel, directed a formidable studio, designed buildings, studied ancient Rome and produced portraits and altarpieces whose apparent calm conceals restless experiment.

The familiar story can sound preordained: gifted child, perfect student, papal favourite, early death. The evidence is more interesting. Raphael's formation was mobile rather than linear. His relation to Perugino cannot be reduced to one apprenticeship. His Roman art was both personal and collaborative. His famous grace depended on drawings, corrections, negotiation and the abilities of other people. Even the date of his birth, often given confidently as 6 April 1483, is not completely settled. A useful modern life can be built through objects as well as anecdotes because works record changes of role that written testimony compresses.

To follow Raphael from Urbino to the Pantheon is therefore to watch an artist continually enlarge the meaning of authorship. At first it meant mastering the full work of a painter. In Rome it came to include directing rooms, buildings and systems through which an idea could move from one mind into many hands.

Raphael became famous early. His drawings were collected during his lifetime, his compositions circulated in prints, and his death prompted letters, poems and public mourning. That abundance can create a false impression that every event is known.

In fact, different kinds of evidence survive unevenly. Contracts fix commissions and legal relations. Letters reveal courtly networks. drawings record decisions without always recording dates. Early biographies preserve valuable memories alongside literary shaping. Paintings themselves carry physical sequences that documents may never mention.

A responsible life joins these records without forcing them into perfect agreement. It distinguishes a contemporary report from a later anecdote, and a likely connection from a documented encounter.

The customary date is 6 April 1483. It creates an elegant symmetry with his death on 6 April 1520, and it is repeated by major collections. The detailed National Gallery catalogue returns to the early evidence and places his birth at Easter 1483, while noting two possible pairs of dates: 28-29 March or 6-7 April.

Raphael made complexity feel welcoming. In his paintings, a crowded assembly can remain lucid, a gesture can carry an argument, and a face can hold public rank and private attention at once. His most famous rooms unite philosophy, poetry, theology, law, history and the ambitions of Renaissance Rome without losing the viewer inside their learning. Major collection accounts rightly stress how rapidly his work expanded from Urbino formation to papal service and the study of antiquity.

That clarity was not effortless. It grew through drawing, transfer, measurement, revision and collaboration. Raphael studied older art with unusual openness, changed rapidly as he moved through central Italy, Florence and Rome, and built a studio able to work across fresco, oil painting, tapestry, print, architecture and the recovery of antiquity.

This is why a single idea of Raphael is never enough. He is the young Umbrian altarpiece painter and the designer of the School of Athens; the maker of small Madonnas and the architect responsible for St Peter's; the intimate portraitist and the director of vast decorative teams. His achievement lies not in choosing between grace and labour, but in making labour take the form of grace.

Raphael has been praised for harmony so often that the word can become a barrier. Harmony sounds passive, as if figures simply arrived in agreeable positions. His compositions are better understood as fields of relation.

Raphael's paintings are famous for making difficulty look resolved. A Madonna's interlocking bodies, a philosopher's gesture, a pope's lowered eyes or an altarpiece crowded with witnesses can appear so inevitable that the labour behind it disappears. Yet Raphael's art was built through repeated acts of testing: sketches on paper, full-size cartoons, transferred outlines, geometrical plans, layered colour, changes made after painting began and, increasingly in Rome, collaboration with other artists.

To understand his paintings is therefore to look beyond a list of masterpieces. A Raphael can be a small oil panel made for close devotion, a portrait on canvas, an altarpiece divided and moved, or a wall painted in fresco by Raphael and assistants. Supports have been thinned, transferred and cradled; colours have faded; varnishes have altered; copies have preserved lost states. "Raphael" names an artist, but on some late works it also names the governing intelligence of a highly organised studio.

Vatican rooms and tapestry culture

The Vatican routes work best when read as rooms, walls, ceilings, cartoons, tapestries and papal programmes rather than as detached poster images.

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Raphael's School of Athens begins with a fiction. Philosophers who lived in different cities and different centuries have entered the same immense hall. Plato and Aristotle advance through its centre as though still absorbed in discussion. Socrates counts arguments on his fingers. Pythagoras bends over a book; Euclid stoops to demonstrate a geometrical proposition; Diogenes has abandoned every social formality and spread himself across the steps. Thought is made visible not as solitude but as a crowded, physical activity-spoken, written, calculated, disputed, taught and watched.

The setting is equally imaginary. It resembles no surviving academy in ancient Athens, yet it feels built rather than merely painted. Barrel vaults recede through a sequence of massive piers; statues occupy deep niches; a brilliant opening of blue sky closes the central axis. Raphael uses linear perspective to bring a multitude of bodies into a single, lucid order. The result is one of the defining images of the Renaissance, but its fame can obscure its strangeness. This is ancient philosophy reconstructed inside the papal palace by a painter in his twenties, for a room where theology, poetry and law occupied the other walls.

The Stanza della Segnatura was the first of the Vatican rooms decorated by Raphael for Pope Julius II. It probably served Julius as a private library and study before later becoming associated with the papal tribunal known as the Segnatura Gratiae et Iustitiae. Books would once have stood beneath images that organised bodies of knowledge on the walls and ceiling. The decoration did not simply embellish a working room; it gave intellectual activity a monumental setting.

Raphael did not paint the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel. His contribution was conceived in paper and realised in thread: a cycle of monumental tapestry designs commissioned by Pope Leo X for the chapel's lower walls. The resulting hangings brought the lives of Saints Peter and Paul beneath the earlier fresco histories of Moses and Christ and below Michelangelo's newly completed ceiling. Woven with wool, silk and precious metal thread, they turned the most famous papal chapel into an environment in which painting, architecture, ceremony and textile met.

The distinction between design and finished object is fundamental. Raphael and his workshop made full-scale cartoons in Rome about 1515-16. Those works on paper travelled to Brussels, where Pieter van Aelst's tapestry workshop translated them on low-warp looms into reversed woven images. Ten original designs are recorded; seven cartoons survive in the Royal Collection and have been on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum since 1865. The Vatican preserves the original tapestry cycle, whose fragile textiles are displayed only on exceptional occasions.

A cartoon is a full-scale working design, not an animated drawing and not a small preliminary sketch. The Italian cartone refers to large paper. For tapestry manufacture, the cartoon supplied the composition at the size needed by the weavers. Raphael's surviving sheets are therefore enormous painted objects assembled from multiple pieces of paper.

They occupy an unusual position between preparation and masterpiece. Their first purpose was translation into another medium. Weavers needed clear contours, colour relationships, figure groups and spatial information, yet the cartoon itself was not intended to hang permanently as the finished chapel decoration. Its later preservation and display transformed a tool of production into one of Britain's most celebrated groups of Renaissance works on paper.

Raphael did not operate the Brussels looms. Nor did Pieter van Aelst merely copy a painting mechanically. Tapestry weaving rebuilds an image through interlaced threads, changes surface and luminosity, introduces borders, and, on the low-warp looms used for the commission, reverses the design. Designer and weaver contributed different kinds of intelligence to one object.

At the centre of Raphael's Disputation of the Holy Sacrament stands a small object on a bare altar. Around it, books open, hands point and robed figures turn urgently toward one another. Above it, the Holy Spirit descends beneath Christ, God the Father and a vast assembly of saints. The entire fresco is organised around the white disc of the consecrated host.

Raphael's Parnassus imagines poetry as a gathering held in music. Apollo plays at the centre beneath a small clearing of sky. The Muses turn around him, while poets from antiquity and the Christian era occupy the slopes of an invented mountain. Homer lifts his blind eyes as if receiving words from beyond sight; Virgil and Dante stand behind him; Sappho sits at the lower edge with her name written on a scroll.

The Stanza della Segnatura is not merely the room that happens to contain several of Raphael's most celebrated paintings. It is the work that makes them an ensemble. Across its four walls, theology, philosophy, poetry, moral virtue and law become fields of human knowledge arranged around a real chamber once used by Pope Julius II as a library and private office. Above them, the ceiling supplies a second system of allegories and correspondences. Doors interrupt two walls, windows divide the other two, and every great composition turns those obstacles into part of its argument.

Raphael's Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple turns a sacred interior into two simultaneous worlds. At the centre, the high priest Onias kneels in prayer before the altar. On the right, a heavenly horseman and two airborne youths hurl themselves upon Heliodorus, who has come to seize the Temple treasure. On the left, women and children recoil, point and climb for a better view. The central prayer is still; divine intervention arrives with crushing speed.

Raphael's Mass at Bolsena makes doubt and certainty share one altar. A Bohemian priest bends toward the consecrated host as blood stains the corporal beneath it. Across from him, Pope Julius II kneels in composed devotion, surrounded by cardinals and attendants. Behind and below, clerics, guards, women and children react at different speeds. The miracle is small; the human world reorganises around it.

Raphael's Miraculous Draught of Fishes holds abundance and instability in one immense design. Two fishing boats sit perilously low in the water beneath a catch too heavy for one crew. Men haul the breaking nets while Simon Peter kneels before Christ, already understanding that the miracle concerns more than fish. On the shore, tall birds establish a foreground from which the viewer looks across the lake toward a calling that will change ordinary labour into apostleship.

Paintings, altarpieces and Madonnas

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Raphael grew up in the court city of Urbino and developed within Central Italian workshop culture. Early commissions around Città di Castello and Perugia demanded altarpieces, processional imagery and small devotional works.

The clarity associated with Perugino mattered: balanced figures, spacious landscapes, calm contours and comprehensible sacred narrative. Raphael learned these principles well enough to revise them from inside.

His early paintings already show unusual attention to how figures relate through gaze, interval and gesture. Harmony is never only prettiness; it is the organisation of attention.

Raphael's Transfiguration joins revelation above to human failure below. Christ rises in radiant glory between Moses and Elijah while Peter, James and John collapse on the mountaintop. Beneath them, the remaining apostles confront a boy they cannot heal, his terrified body held within a crowd of pleading, pointing and disputing figures. Light opens heaven at the top; the lower world strains toward a power it does not yet possess.

The two episodes follow one another in the Gospels. Christ descends from the mountain into the crisis below and cures the boy after his disciples have failed. Raphael makes the sequence simultaneous, so the healing is not yet shown but its source is visible. The altarpiece became his final painting, left incomplete or at least still in the workshop when he died in April 1520, and its precise division of hands remains one of the central questions in Raphael scholarship.

Giulio de' Medici became bishop of Narbonne in 1515 and commissioned two monumental altarpieces for the city's cathedral. Raphael received the Transfiguration. Sebastiano del Piombo received the Raising of Lazarus, with compositional assistance from Michelangelo. The two works were thus conceived within a competitive Roman situation involving the circles of the age's most prominent artists.

Raphael's Sistine Madonna does not show the Virgin seated in a stable heaven. She advances. Barefoot on cloud, carrying a solemn Christ Child, Mary moves through opened curtains toward the space of the altar and the people standing before it. Saint Sixtus looks up and gestures outward; Saint Barbara lowers her gaze. Two putti lean on a parapet below, waiting at the boundary between the vision and the church.

Raphael's Madonna of Foligno joins a private act of gratitude to a public vision. High above, the Virgin sits within a radiant circle of cloud and cherubim, holding the Christ Child. Below, Saint John the Baptist points upward, Saint Francis kneels, Saint Jerome presents the kneeling donor Sigismondo de' Conti, and a small angel holds an empty tablet. Between them, a distant town is struck or illuminated by a brilliant descending light.

Raphael's Marriage of the Virgin turns a wedding into a theory of pictorial order. In the foreground, a priest joins the hands of Mary and Joseph. Behind them, a broad paved square opens toward a many-sided temple whose central doorway receives nearly every line of perspective. Human ritual, mathematical space and ideal architecture converge on the same axis.

Raphael's Madonna of the Goldfinch turns a child's encounter with a bird into a meditation on love and foreknowledge. The young John the Baptist offers a goldfinch to Jesus, who reaches to stroke it. Mary shelters both children within the broad triangle of her body, watching their exchange while holding a small sacred book.

Raphael's Alba Madonna turns a circular field into a world of glances, angled limbs and quiet foreknowledge. Mary sits on the ground in an open landscape, a book held in one hand. Christ balances against her raised knee while reaching for the reed cross offered by the young John the Baptist. The three faces are serious; their bodies remain tenderly joined.

Raphael's Madonna of the Chair compresses motherhood, prophecy and colour into a circle only 71 centimetres across. Mary sits sideways on a courtly chamber chair and clasps Christ against her chest. Their arms interlock, her cheek touches his temple, and both turn toward the viewer. At the right, the young John the Baptist joins his hands in prayer.

Raphael's Ecstasy of Saint Cecilia is a painting about music at the moment when earthly instruments fall silent. Cecilia stands at the centre holding a small organ, but its pipes are sliding from her grasp. Broken and discarded instruments lie at her feet. She does not look down. Her face rises toward a choir of angels singing from an opening in the sky.

Portraits, drawings and architecture

The portraits, drawings and architectural routes show how much of Raphael's importance depends on design, identity, transfer, workshop systems and later evidence.

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Raphael's drawings are the most direct surviving record of how his art changed before it reached a wall, panel, tapestry, sculpture or building. On paper he could test a first arrangement, repeat a hand, turn a head, study an antique body, calculate architecture or give a collaborator a design precise enough to execute.

No single "Raphael drawing style" covers this activity. Metalpoint rewards control; pen can move from searching line to emphatic contour; chalk builds bodies through tone; a full-size cartoon carries a composition toward transfer. A rapid sketch and a highly finished study may serve different moments of the same project.

Drawings also complicate authorship. Raphael trained gifted assistants, and his designs were copied during and after his life. Modern study therefore combines visual judgment, provenance, material examination and non-invasive science rather than trusting a famous inscription alone.

Raphael might place several alternatives on one sheet, rotate the paper and try again in unused space. A first line need not be correct; its relation to later lines reveals the search.

Raphael's architectural career was brief, ambitious and inseparable from his study of ancient Rome. He designed churches, chapels, palaces and a vast suburban villa; directed work on the new Saint Peter's Basilica; commissioned a translation of Vitruvius; and helped devise a systematic survey of Rome's monuments. Buildings were not an activity added casually to painting. They became another way to organise bodies, movement, memory and civic power.

The surviving record is uneven. Some structures remain but were completed or altered by others. Some palaces were demolished and are known through drawings or later reconstructions. At Saint Peter's, later architects transformed almost every aspect of the project. Villa Madama survives as one realised portion of a far larger design.

Raphael's importance therefore cannot be measured by counting untouched buildings. It lies in the architectural intelligence preserved across plans, walls, painted spaces, collaborative workshops and his extraordinary proposal to record ancient Rome before more of it disappeared.

Raphael's fame travelled through copper long before most Europeans could see his frescoes or paintings. Engravings turned his designs into portable fields of line, able to circulate through courts, workshops, collections and markets far beyond Rome. The most important early partner in that expansion was Marcantonio Raimondi, whose technical control gave Raphael's figures a persuasive life in black ink.

Raphael was not a practising engraver. Works commonly called "Raphael prints" were usually cut by Marcantonio or another printmaker after a composition supplied by Raphael, a drawing prepared for translation, or an existing work. That division is not a minor catalogue detail. It defines a collaborative system in which invention, engraving, printing, publishing and later copying could belong to different people.

Engraving requires a burin to incise controlled lines into a copper plate. Ink is worked into those recesses, the surface wiped and damp paper pressed against the plate. The print therefore reverses the design on the copper. Repeated impressions can be taken until wear or reworking changes the plate's capacity.

Raphael's Portrait of Pope Julius II brings one of Renaissance Europe's most forceful rulers disconcertingly close. The pope wears red and white, displays jewelled rings and sits in a chair marked by golden acorns. Nothing about his office is hidden. Yet his eyes fall away from the viewer, his beard catches signs of age, one hand closes around a handkerchief and the other holds the chair. Public power and bodily strain occupy the same narrow space.

Raphael's La Velata, or Woman with a Veil, is a portrait in which fabric carries almost as much meaning as the face. A young woman turns in three-quarter view, one hand at her breast and the other arm extended toward the spectator. Light moves across an immense pale silk sleeve before receding toward her watchful eyes.

Raphael's Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione turns social accomplishment into a study in restraint. Its sitter wears black, grey and white rather than brilliant court colour. His costly fur does not glitter. He sits without an emblem of office, a book or an architectural setting, and his hands disappear against the lower edge. Yet few Renaissance portraits convey rank, intelligence and cultivated ease more immediately.

Raphael's preparatory study for Adam in the Disputa turns a single sheet into two kinds of thought. A large seated nude occupies its centre, modelled in black chalk and white lead. At the upper left, a much smaller architectural sketch tests a possible arrangement for the vault of the same Vatican room.

Raphael's Study for The Massacre of the Innocents is a drawing made to move. Pen and brown ink define a crowd of mothers, children and attackers over earlier red chalk. Tiny pricked holes follow much of the design, evidence that its outlines were transferred onward. The destination was not a known painting but Marcantonio Raimondi 's engraving, an image designed for multiplication.

Villa Madama is both one of Raphael's greatest architectural designs and a building that never existed in the complete form he imagined. Begun around 1517-18 on the slopes of Monte Mario, the project combined a vast suburban residence with courts, loggias, gardens, water, entertainment spaces and views across Rome. Only part of the plan was constructed.

Reading cautions

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The Vatican pages separate the Stanza della Segnatura, the Stanza di Eliodoro, the Loggia, the Sistine tapestries and later reproductive culture. The same name or setting is not enough to merge them.

The portrait pages keep sitter confidence, copies, lost works and traditional titles under control. The drawing pages do the same for recto/verso evidence, exact object records and later print translation.

For images, this PDF uses already-present local website assets and does not newly approve, ingest or replace media. Online pages remain the source of record for image caveats and references.

Selected plates

A clean image sequence from existing local Raphael assets.

The School of Athens

The School of Athens anchors the Vatican story through architecture, philosophy and a carefully staged intellectual community.



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Raphael's School of Athens begins with a fiction. Philosophers who lived in different cities and different centuries have entered the same immense hall. Plato and Aristotle advance through its centre as though still absorbed in discussion. Socrates counts arguments on his fingers. Pythagoras bends over a book; Euclid stoops to demonstrate a geometrical proposition; Diogenes has abandoned every social formality and spread himself across the steps. Thought is made visible not as solitude but as a crowded, physical activity-spoken, written, calculated, disputed, taught and watched.

Read online: /raphael/school-of-athens/

Transfiguration

Transfiguration keeps Raphael's late altarpiece ambition visible through contrast, light and complex narrative staging.



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Read online: /raphael/transfiguration/

Sistine Madonna

Sistine Madonna shows how a famous image still needs object, setting and devotional context.



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Read online: /raphael/sistine-madonna/

Marriage of the Virgin

Marriage of the Virgin is a useful bridge between Perugian inheritance and Raphael's own spatial poise.



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Read online: /raphael/marriage-of-the-virgin/

St Cecilia

St Cecilia lets the guide keep music, sanctity, instruments and Bologna context together.



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Raphael's Ecstasy of Saint Cecilia is a painting about music at the moment when earthly instruments fall silent. Cecilia stands at the centre holding a small organ, but its pipes are sliding from her grasp. Broken and discarded instruments lie at her feet. She does not look down. Her face rises toward a choir of angels singing from an opening in the sky.

Read online: /raphael/st-cecilia/

Three Graces

The Three Graces page is treated as a finished Chantilly panel, not the separate drawing-study route.



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Raphael's Three Graces is a painting of balance achieved through revision. Three nude women stand close together in a shallow landscape. The central figure turns her back to the viewer while the others face outward. Arms pass behind shoulders, bodies alternate front and back, and each woman holds a golden sphere or fruit.

Read online: /raphael/three-graces/

Portrait of Pope Julius II

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Read online: /raphael/portrait-of-pope-julius-ii/

La Velata

La Velata preserves sitter caution while showing Raphael's command of fabric, presence and surface.



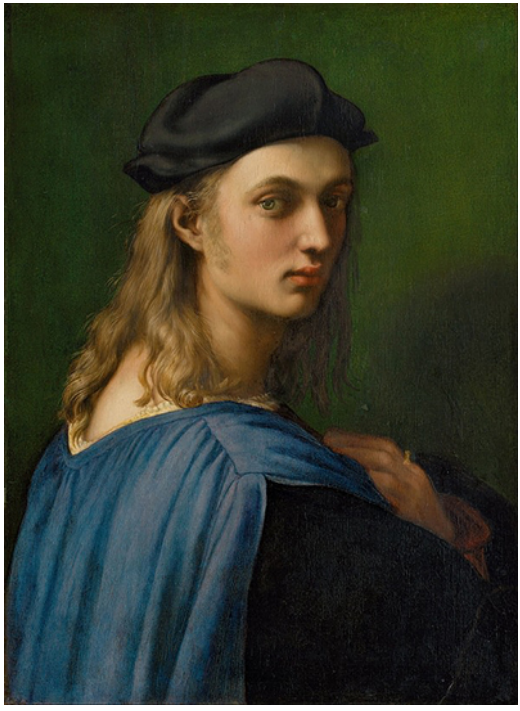
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Read online: /raphael/la-velata/

Portrait of Bindo Altoviti

Bindo Altoviti brings youthful portraiture, pose and later collecting history into a compact close reading.



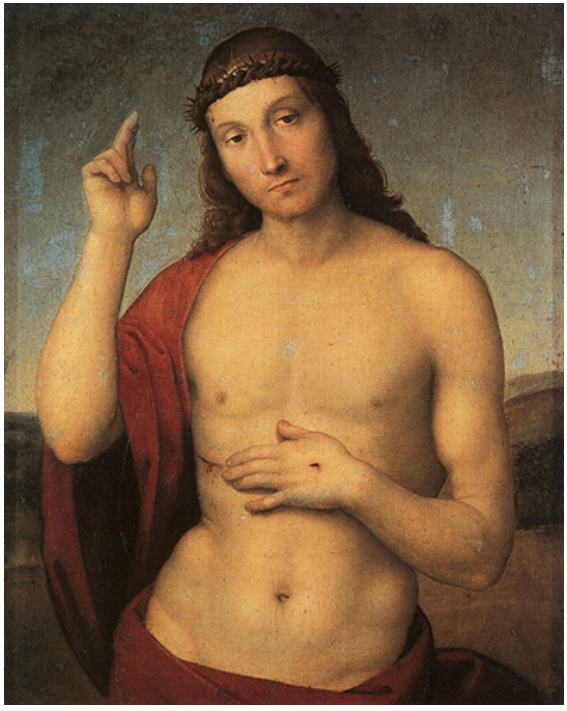
Bindo Altoviti brings youthful portraiture, pose and later collecting history into a compact close reading.

Raphael's Portrait of Bindo Altoviti begins with a turn. A young man has his back partly toward us, then looks over his shoulder as though our arrival has interrupted him. Long blond hair brushes a blue garment; a black cap tips across the crown; one hand rises near the heart. The green field behind him offers neither room nor landscape. Everything depends on the sitter's movement and the speed with which Raphael converts it into attention.

Read online: /raphael/portrait-of-bindo-altoviti/

Christ Blessing

Christ Blessing is used as a quiet devotional close-reading page, with image evidence kept local to the route.



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Raphael's Christ the Redeemer Blessing brings the risen Christ extraordinarily close. His nude torso fills a panel little more than thirty centimetres high. A red cloth crosses his lower body and one shoulder. His right hand rises in blessing; the other rests beside the wound in his side. The crown of thorns remains upon his head, and the marks of Crucifixion remain visible even as clear daylight and a quiet landscape announce life beyond death.

Read online: /raphael/christ-blessing/

Saint Catherine of Alexandria

Saint Catherine of Alexandria makes pose, martyrdom attribute and landscape detail available for slow looking.



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Raphael's Saint Catherine of Alexandria turns a martyr's violent story into an image of inward revelation. Catherine rests against the spiked wheel intended for her torture, yet Raphael omits the sword and palm that often accompany her. Her right hand presses to her heart. Her lips part and her head rises toward a golden opening in the clouds. The body spirals; the mind seems fixed beyond the visible world.

Read online: /raphael/saint-catherine-of-alexandria/

Online route catalogue

The 99 Waterhouse+ Raphael routes included in this local guide.

Start here

Each entry is a route back into the full online Raphael cluster.

Raphael and Printmaking

Keep Raphael's designs, Marcantonio Raimondi's engraving practice and after-Raphael reproductive culture distinct. Raphael's fame travelled through copper long before most Europeans could see his frescoes or paintings. Engravings turned his designs into portable fields...

/raphael/prints/

Architecture

Design, attribution and execution histories differ across Raphael-associated buildings. Raphael's architectural career was brief, ambitious and inseparable from his study of ancient Rome. He designed churches, chapels, palaces and a vast...

/raphael/architecture/

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Biography

Raphael's life was short enough to fit within a single generation and large enough to alter the practice of European art. He was born in the small court...

/raphael/biography/

Raphael

Raphael made complexity feel welcoming. In his paintings, a crowded assembly can remain lucid, a gesture can carry an argument, and a face can hold public...

/raphael/

Vatican rooms, chapel and fresco program

Each entry is a route back into the full online Raphael cluster.

The School of Athens

Raphael's School of Athens begins with a fiction. Philosophers who lived in different cities and different centuries have entered the same immense hall....

/raphael/school-of-athens/

Disputation of the Holy Sacrament

At the centre of Raphael's Disputation of the Holy Sacrament stands a small object on a bare altar. Around it, books open, hands point and robed figures...

/raphael/disputation-of-the-holy-sacrament/

Parnassus

Raphael's Parnassus imagines poetry as a gathering held in music. Apollo plays at the centre beneath a small clearing of sky. The Muses turn around him,...

/raphael/parnassus/

Stanza della Segnatura

The Stanza della Segnatura is not merely the room that happens to contain several of Raphael's most celebrated paintings. It is the work that makes them an...

/raphael/stanza-della-segnatura/

Theological Virtues

Raphael's Theological Virtues belongs to a wall about justice, but its principal figures do not behave like judges. Fortitude rests beside a lion and an...

/raphael/theological-virtues/

Adam and Eve from the Stanza della Segnatura

Raphael's Adam and Eve compresses the turning point of Genesis into a ceiling compartment scarcely large enough for three protagonists and a tree. Eve...

/raphael/adam-and-eve/

Apollo and Marsyas from the Stanza della Segnatura

In Raphael's Apollo and Marsyas, music has already ended and judgement has become punishment. Apollo stands with his stringed instrument, extending one arm...

/raphael/apollo-and-marsyas/

The Separation of Land and Water from the Raphael Loggia

In The Separation of Land and Water, God moves above an emerging world, commanding dry ground and waters into their distinct domains. The body is airborne,...

/raphael/separation-of-land-and-water/

The Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple

Raphael's Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple turns a sacred interior into two simultaneous worlds. At the centre, the high priest Onias kneels in...

/raphael/expulsion-of-heliodorus-from-the-temple/

The Mass at Bolsena

Raphael's Mass at Bolsena makes doubt and certainty share one altar. A Bohemian priest bends toward the consecrated host as blood stains the corporal...

/raphael/mass-at-bolsena/

Moses Saved from the Water from the Raphael Loggia

Raphael's design for Moses Saved from the Water gathers women around a child whose identity will alter biblical history. Pharaoh's daughter and her...

/raphael/moses-saved-from-the-water/

Raphael and the Sistine Chapel Tapestries

This route concerns Raphael's cartoons and tapestries for the chapel, not Michelangelo's ceiling or the Raphael Rooms. Raphael did not paint the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel. His contribution was conceived in paper and realised in thread: a cycle of monumental tapestry...

/raphael/sistine-chapel/

Altarpieces, sacred history and devotional

Each entry is a route back into the full online Raphael cluster.

Gregory IX Approving the Decretals

Raphael's Gregory IX Approving the Decretals presents law as a ceremony of transmission. A pope sits enthroned beneath a coffered vault as a legal text is...

/raphael/gregory-ix-approving-the-decretals/

The Miraculous Draught of Fishes

Raphael's Miraculous Draught of Fishes holds abundance and instability in one immense design. Two fishing boats sit perilously low in the water beneath a...

/raphael/miraculous-draught-of-fishes/

The Transfiguration

Raphael's Transfiguration joins revelation above to human failure below. Christ rises in radiant glory between Moses and Elijah while Peter, James and John...

/raphael/transfiguration/

The Deposition

Treat the Baglioni panel separately from preparatory drawings and alias routes. Raphael's Deposition is a painting of movement after death. Christ has already been taken down from the cross. Three men raise his pale body with linen...

/raphael/deposition/

The Annunciation in Raphael's Oddi Altarpiece Predella

Raphael's Oddi Annunciation unfolds across a measured floor. Gabriel enters from the left, one knee lowered and a lily in hand, while Mary sits beneath a...

/raphael/annunciation/

The Adoration of the Magi in Raphael's Oddi Predella

The centre of Raphael's Oddi predella is filled by arrival. Mary holds the Christ Child at one side of the sacred meeting while the Magi and their...

/raphael/adoration-of-the-magi/

Presentation in the Temple: The Oddi Predella's Final Scene

Raphael's Presentation in the Temple brings the infancy sequence of the Oddi Altarpiece to a poised architectural conclusion. Mary and Joseph have carried...

/raphael/presentation-in-the-temple/

Baronci Altarpiece: Reconstructing a Shattered First Commission

Raphael's Baronci Altarpiece no longer exists as a complete painting. Made in 1500-01 for a chapel in Città di Castello, the large wooden work represented...

/raphael/baronci-altarpiece/

The Mond Crucifixion

Raphael's Mond Crucifixion presents Christ's death with a calm so complete that suffering seems held within a larger sacramental order. Christ hangs against...

/raphael/mond-crucifixion/

Saint John the Baptist Preaching

Raphael's Saint John the Baptist Preaching makes listening its real subject. John stands alone on a low rise, wrapped in a red mantle over camel skin. His...

/raphael/st-john-the-baptist-preaching/

Christ the Redeemer Blessing

Raphael's Christ the Redeemer Blessing brings the risen Christ extraordinarily close. His nude torso fills a panel little more than thirty centimetres high....

/raphael/christ-blessing/

Saint Catherine of Alexandria

Raphael's Saint Catherine of Alexandria turns a martyr's violent story into an image of inward revelation. Catherine rests against the spiked wheel intended...

/raphael/saint-catherine-of-alexandria/

Saint George Fighting the Dragon: The Louvre Version

Raphael's Louvre Saint George captures the instant before a decisive sword stroke. George's lance has already broken in the struggle, leaving part of it...

/raphael/st-george/

Saint George and the Dragon: The Washington Version

Raphael's Washington Saint George and the Dragon turns a legendary rescue into a diplomatic image. A fully armoured George drives a long lance down toward...

/raphael/st-george-and-the-dragon/

Saint Sebastian

Raphael's Saint Sebastian does not show the martyr tied to a tree, pierced by a volley of arrows and exposed to public violence. It presents an exquisitely...

/raphael/st-sebastian/

Small Saint Michael at the Louvre

Raphael's Small Saint Michael turns a panel scarcely thirty-one centimetres high into a vision of cosmic punishment. The armoured archangel descends with...

/raphael/st-michael/

Saint Michael Vanquishing Satan: The Great Louvre Painting

Raphael's Great Saint Michael fills a towering vertical field with one irreversible action. The winged archangel advances through the air and plants a foot...

/raphael/st-michael-vanquishing-satan/

Vision of Ezekiel

Raphael's Vision of Ezekiel compresses the heavens, the earth and a prophet's encounter with divine glory into a panel only 41 centimetres high. God the...

/raphael/vision-of-ezekiel/

Saint Margaret and the Dragon: The Vienna Version

Raphael's Vienna Saint Margaret places a young woman inside the coils of a monster and gives her no weapon except a cross. The dragon's open jaws rise...

/raphael/serpent-and-cross/

Raphael and Giulio Romano's Saint Margaret: The Louvre Version

The Louvre Saint Margaret makes a martyr's victory look almost effortless. A young woman in blue and red steps across a dragon's opened wing. She carries a...

/raphael/st-margaret/

Saint John the Baptist in the Desert

Raphael's Saint John the Baptist as a Boy presents a solitary adolescent in a wilderness that seems to wait for his voice. John sits on a rock, his pale,...

/raphael/st-john-the-baptist-in-the-desert/

Ecstasy of Saint Cecilia

Raphael's Ecstasy of Saint Cecilia is a painting about music at the moment when earthly instruments fall silent. Cecilia stands at the centre holding a...

/raphael/st-cecilia/

Visitation

Raphael's Visitation makes a quiet greeting carry the weight of sacred history. Mary has travelled to the hill country to see her older relative Elizabeth....

/raphael/visitation/

Christ Falling on the Way to Calvary

Raphael's Christ Falling on the Way to Calvary turns the road to execution into a collision of forces. Christ has fallen beneath the cross. Soldiers and...

/raphael/christ-falling-on-the-way-to-calvary/

Vision of a Knight

Raphael's Vision of a Knight presents a choice without showing anyone choose. A young soldier sleeps on the ground beneath a bay tree. At either side stands...

/raphael/vision-of-a-knight/

Madonnas and Holy Families

Each entry is a route back into the full online Raphael cluster.

The Sistine Madonna

Raphael's Sistine Madonna does not show the Virgin seated in a stable heaven. She advances. Barefoot on cloud, carrying a solemn Christ Child, Mary moves...

/raphael/sistine-madonna/

The Madonna of Foligno

Raphael's Madonna of Foligno joins a private act of gratitude to a public vision. High above, the Virgin sits within a radiant circle of cloud and cherubim,...

/raphael/madonna-of-foligno/

The Crowning of the Virgin: Raphael's Oddi Altarpiece

Raphael's Crowning of the Virgin joins an empty tomb on earth to a coronation in heaven. In the lower register, the apostles crowd around Mary's...

/raphael/crowning-of-the-virgin/

The Marriage of the Virgin

Raphael's Marriage of the Virgin turns a wedding into a theory of pictorial order. In the foreground, a priest joins the hands of Mary and Joseph. Behind...

/raphael/marriage-of-the-virgin/

Ansidei Madonna

Raphael's Ansidei Madonna stages sacred conversation as concentrated attention. The Virgin sits high on a carved throne with the alert Christ Child upright...

/raphael/madonna-and-child-with-st-john-the-baptist-and-st-nicholas-of-bari/

Madonna of the Goldfinch

Raphael's Madonna of the Goldfinch turns a child's encounter with a bird into a meditation on love and foreknowledge. The young John the Baptist offers a...

/raphael/madonna-del-cardellino/

Madonna of the Meadow

Raphael's Madonna of the Meadow places a prophecy of death inside the first uncertain steps of childhood. Mary sits low in an open pasture, lightly...

/raphael/madonna-del-prato/

La Belle Jardinière

Raphael's La Belle Jardinière gathers the Virgin Mary, the standing Christ Child and the young John the Baptist into a landscape of extraordinary calm. Mary...

/raphael/belle-jardiniere/

Alba Madonna

Raphael's Alba Madonna turns a circular field into a world of glances, angled limbs and quiet foreknowledge. Mary sits on the ground in an open landscape, a...

/raphael/alba-madonna/

Madonna of the Chair

Raphael's Madonna of the Chair compresses motherhood, prophecy and colour into a circle only 71 centimetres across. Mary sits sideways on a courtly chamber...

/raphael/madonna-of-the-chair/

Grand Duke's Madonna

Raphael's Grand Duke's Madonna presents Mary and Christ with almost radical simplicity. The Virgin stands, holding the child forward while lowering a...

/raphael/grand-dukes-madonna/

Madonna of the Pinks

Raphael's Madonna of the Pinks is small enough to be held between two adult hands, yet it contains a palace room, a distant landscape and a complete...

/raphael/madonna-of-the-pinks/

Small Cowper Madonna

Raphael's Small Cowper Madonna is an image of shared attention. Mary holds Christ on her lap in a green landscape. One of his feet rests on her hand, his...

/raphael/small-cowper-madonna/

Madonna and Child with Book

Raphael's Madonna and Child with Book turns reading into prophecy. Mary supports Christ beneath the deep blue arch of her mantle. Their hands meet around an...

/raphael/madonna-and-child-with-the-book/

Madonna of Loreto

Raphael's Madonna of Loreto turns a mother's veil into both plaything and prophecy. Mary stretches transparent cloth above the reclining Christ Child, who...

/raphael/madonna-of-loreto/

Madonna del Baldacchino

Raphael's Madonna del Baldacchino is a Florentine altarpiece on the threshold of Rome. Mary and Christ sit high on a throne beneath a ceremonial canopy....

/raphael/madonna-of-the-baldacchino/

Canigiani Holy Family

Raphael's Canigiani Holy Family turns five figures into a pyramid of care. Mary and Elizabeth sit with Christ and the young John the Baptist, while Joseph...

/raphael/canigiani-holy-family/

Raphael and Giulio Romano's Holy Family under an Oak Tree

The Holy Family under an Oak Tree places sacred childhood beside the material remains of ancient Rome. Joseph leans against a classical ruin. Mary supports...

/raphael/holy-family-of-the-oak-tree/

Holy Family with a Lamb

Raphael's Holy Family with a Lamb makes a mother's action the centre of a theological argument. Christ bends over a lamb, embracing the animal that...

/raphael/holy-family-with-a-lamb/

Virgin of the Rose

Raphael's Virgin of the Rose is famous for a flower he never painted. The rose rests on a lower strip added when the picture was transferred from its...

/raphael/virgin-of-the-rose/

Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints

Raphael's Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints was made for looking upward, outward and downward. At its centre, Mary sits high upon a throne with the...

/raphael/madonna-and-child-enthroned-with-saints/

Portraits

Each entry is a route back into the full online Raphael cluster.

La Fornarina

Raphael's La Fornarina is both one of the Renaissance's most intimate images and one of its most persistent biographical traps. A young woman sits...

/raphael/fornarina/

La Velata

Raphael's La Velata, or Woman with a Veil, is a portrait in which fabric carries almost as much meaning as the face. A young woman turns in three-quarter...

/raphael/la-velata/

Portrait of a Lady with a Unicorn

Raphael's Lady with a Unicorn looks serene, but the painting is the result of repeated transformation. The young woman now holds a small unicorn, symbol of...

/raphael/portrait-of-a-lady-with-a-unicorn/

Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione

Raphael's Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione turns social accomplishment into a study in restraint. Its sitter wears black, grey and white rather than...

/raphael/portrait-of-baldassare-castiglione/

Portrait of Andrea Navagero and Agostino Beazzano

Raphael's Portrait of Andrea Navagero and Agostino Beazzano is not simply two likenesses fitted onto one canvas. The men turn in different ways, occupy...

/raphael/portrait-of-andrea-navagero-and-agostino-beazzano/

Portrait of a Young Man, Traditionally Called Pietro Bembo

The sitter identification is traditional and uncertain. Raphael's Budapest portrait presents a young man at extremely close range. A parapet holds his hands near the surface, a red cap punctuates the dark...

/raphael/portrait-of-the-young-pietro-bembo/

Portrait of Pope Julius II

Raphael's Portrait of Pope Julius II brings one of Renaissance Europe's most forceful rulers disconcertingly close. The pope wears red and white, displays...

/raphael/portrait-of-pope-julius-ii/

Portrait of Leo X with Cardinals Giulio de' Medici and Luigi de' Rossi

Raphael's Portrait of Leo X with Cardinals Giulio de' Medici and Luigi de' Rossi is a painting about looking at power. The pope has paused over a lavish...

/raphael/portraits-of-leo-x-cardinal-luigi-de-rossi-and-giulio-de-medici/

Portrait of a Cardinal

Raphael's Portrait of a Cardinal makes anonymity feel like presence rather than absence. A thin man in red and white sits against a nearly black ground. His...

/raphael/portrait-of-a-cardinal/

Portrait of Bindo Altoviti

Raphael's Portrait of Bindo Altoviti begins with a turn. A young man has his back partly toward us, then looks over his shoulder as though our arrival has...

/raphael/portrait-of-bindo-altoviti/

Young Man with an Apple

An unidentified young man holds a golden apple near the lower edge of Raphael's portrait. His hands rest on a green parapet, his red velvet coat is bordered...

/raphael/portrait-of-a-man-holding-an-apple/

Portrait of Elisabetta Gonzaga

Raphael's Portrait of Elisabetta Gonzaga meets the viewer with complete frontality. The Duchess of Urbino neither turns into the scene nor extends a hand...

/raphael/portrait-of-elizabeth-gonzaga/

Portrait of Agnolo Doni

Raphael's Portrait of Agnolo Doni presents a Florentine merchant without the materials of trade. There are no bales of cloth, account books or coins. Agnolo...

/raphael/portrait-of-agnolo-doni/

Portrait of Maddalena Doni

Maddalena Strozzi Doni sits before a distant landscape with her hands folded, her shoulders widened by sumptuous sleeves and her jewellery arranged against...

/raphael/portrait-of-maddalena-doni/

Portrait of a Woman, Known as La gravida

A woman sits close to the picture plane, one hand holding a glove on a ledge and the other spread gently over the curve of her abdomen. Behind her is...

/raphael/pregnant-woman/

Lost Czartoryski Portrait of a Young Man

The Czartoryski portrait remains a lost work; avoid implying a current location. Raphael's Portrait of a Young Man cannot presently be stood before. The panel disappeared amid Nazi looting during the Second World War and has never been...

/raphael/portrait-of-a-young-man/

Self-Portrait with a Friend

Two men occupy nearly the same dark space in Raphael's Self-Portrait with a Friend. The man in front turns outward and points; the man behind places a hand...

/raphael/self-portrait-with-a-friend/

Raphael and Giulio Romano's Portrait of Doña Isabel de Requesens

Lead with the Louvre's current identification and preserve Giulio Romano's role. For centuries, the woman in this magnificent red portrait was called Joanna of Aragon. The name entered books, prints and memory so thoroughly that it survives in the page address. The Louvre now identifies her as Doña Isabel de Requesens, vice-queen of Naples, and credits both Raphael and Giulio Romano.

/raphael/joanna-of-aragon/

Self-Portrait

Raphael turns toward us from a field of brown darkness. He wears a dark cap and robe; a narrow edge of white shirt interrupts the nearly continuous shadow....

/raphael/self-portrait/

Drawings and studies

Each entry is a route back into the full online Raphael cluster.

Lamentation over the Dead Christ: Raphael's Louvre Study

Before Raphael made Christ's burial into a procession in the Baglioni Deposition, he imagined grief gathered around a still body. The Louvre drawing known...

/raphael/lamentation-over-the-dead-christ/

Compositional Study for the Baglioni Deposition

This is the Uffizi compositional study for the Baglioni Deposition, not the Borghese panel itself. Raphael's Uffizi Compositional Study for the Deposition is a drawing close to becoming a painting. The main carrying group has been resolved in pen and ink:...

/raphael/study-for-the-entombment-in-the-galleria-borghese-rome/

Studies of Two Apostles for the Transfiguration

Raphael's Studies of Two Apostles for the Transfiguration concentrates the emotional crisis of a monumental altarpiece into two heads and several hands....

/raphael/heads-and-hands-of-two-apostles/

Study for Adam in the Disputa

Raphael's preparatory study for Adam in the Disputa turns a single sheet into two kinds of thought. A large seated nude occupies its centre, modelled in...

/raphael/study-for-adam-in-the-disputa/

Study for The Massacre of the Innocents

Separate drawing, print, tapestry, copy and after-Raphael evidence. Raphael's Study for The Massacre of the Innocents is a drawing made to move. Pen and brown ink define a crowd of mothers, children and attackers over...

/raphael/study-for-the-massacre-of-the-innocents/

Architecture and classical design

Each entry is a route back into the full online Raphael cluster.

Three Graces

Finished Chantilly panel; keep distinct from the Royal Collection drawing study. Raphael's Three Graces is a painting of balance achieved through revision. Three nude women stand close together in a shallow landscape. The central figure...

/raphael/three-graces/

Triumph of Galatea

Raphael's Triumph of Galatea fills a wall with movement that never becomes disorder. The sea nymph stands in a shell-chariot drawn by dolphins. Her red...

/raphael/triumph-of-galatea/

Raphael and St Peter's Basilica

Raphael is one architect in a long multi-author building history. Raphael directed the building of New Saint Peter's Basilica for six years, but the church standing in Vatican City is not "his" building in the simple...

/raphael/st-peters-basilica/

Villa Madama

Villa Madama is both one of Raphael's greatest architectural designs and a building that never existed in the complete form he imagined. Begun around...

/raphael/villa-madama/

Chigi Chapel

Raphael's Chigi Chapel is a work of architecture, mosaic, sculpture and funerary design conceived as one environment. Agostino Chigi, the exceptionally...

/raphael/chigi-chapel/

Sant'Eligio degli Orefici

Sant'Eligio degli Orefici is one of the smallest buildings associated with Raphael and one of the most revealing. Designed for Rome's goldsmiths and...

/raphael/sant-eligio-degli-orefici/

Palazzo Branconio dell'Aquila

Lost building evidence should not be written as a surviving original fabric. Palazzo Branconio dell'Aquila was one of Raphael's boldest architectural designs, but no part of the Roman palace survives on its original site. Built...

/raphael/palazzo-branconio-dell-aquila/

Palazzo Jacopo da Brescia

Palazzo Jacopo da Brescia presents an unusual survival problem. Raphael designed the compact Roman residence for Pope Leo X's physician between about 1515...

/raphael/palazzo-jacopo-da-brescia/

Palazzo Pandolfini

Palazzo Pandolfini brought Raphael's Roman architectural thinking to Florence. Giannozzo Pandolfini, bishop of Troia, commissioned the residence for his...

/raphael/palazzo-pandolfini/

Palazzo Vidoni Caffarelli and Raphael's Circle

Palazzo Vidoni Caffarelli is often presented as a surviving palace by Raphael. The reality is more valuable and more complex. The early building was created...

/raphael/palazzo-vidoni-caffarelli/

Psyche Presenting Venus with Water from the Styx in Raphael's Farnesina Lo

Psyche approaches Venus with a small vessel containing water from the Styx. The action occupies a curved pendentive high in the entrance loggia of the Villa...

/raphael/psyche-presenting-venus-with-water-from-the-styx/

Sources and image notes

The online articles remain the detailed source environment for each route.

This guide is a compact companion to the Raphael pages on TheHistoryOfArt.org. Detailed references, object records, source notes and page-specific caveats are maintained on the individual HTML pages.

The page library behind this guide is the approved Waterhouse+ Raphael set: 99 public texts mapped through the route crosswalk. Two same-object aliases remain outside the guide catalogue rather than becoming duplicate essays.

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